

Wanganui Collegiate School Big School



Location: 128 Liverpool Street, **Heritage NZ Pouhere Taonga**
Whanganui **List Number:** 1004

Physical Description: This two storied, symmetrical, rectangular planned building with a brick ground floor and rough cast stucco upper floor, is designed in the neo-Georgian style, but with materials and forms consistent with most of the buildings on the campus designed in the Arts and Crafts style. The west elevation faces the main access road through the campus and has a central and two corner pavilions projecting slightly from the body of the building. The central pavilion is brick almost its entire height, a serliana window on the upper floor and a gabled hipped roof. The two other pavilions have hipped roofs, a characteristic of the neo-Georgian style. Pairs and single windows are spaced regularly along the elevation.

Behind the main elevation is a smaller wing parallel to it with a gabled roof and wings either side at right angles with hipped, shallow projecting pavilions.

Other known names:

Current Use: School

Register Item Number:

36

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
- Iltar

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Former Uses: Main Hall, Administration, Classrooms

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

Architectural Style: Neo-Georgian **Date of Construction:** 1911

Materials: Brick, rough cast stucco, timber joinery, Marseille tile roofing

Registered owner:

Legal Description: Pt Wanganui Ind School Res Pt Lots 2B 3B 5B 7B 8B Deeds P73.

History: One of the two endowed secondary schools in the Dominion not covered by the Section 89 of the Education Act, the other being Christ's College in Christchurch.¹ In 1852, Governor Sir George Grey gave to Bishop Selwyn of the Anglican Church 250 acres in Wanganui for the purposes of education.² The grant was swampland, which was otherwise unsaleable.³ Grey intended the school to be for "the education of children of poor and destitute persons, being inhabitants of islands in the Pacific."⁴ They were to have "religious education, industrial training and instruction in the English language."⁵ The school was called the "Church of England Native and Industrial School" and officially opened in January 1854, replacing the earlier church school attached to Richard Taylor's Mission Station.⁶

The first headmaster was Rev. Charles Henry Sinderby Nicholls, followed by Henry H. Godwin (1865-1877) and Dr. George Richard Saunders (1878 to 1882).⁷ Nicholls arrived in Wanganui in 1853 not only as the new school master but also the minister for the Wanganui Church.⁸ The first buildings were in Victoria Avenue and included a headmaster's house which took in boarders and a schoolroom.⁹ The European pupils from the Church School were transferred to the new school and a dozen or so Maori children from pa up and down the coast

¹ *Wanganui Coronation Souvenir*, 1911. Wanganui Chronicle Co. Ltd.

² Ibid. Bolith, H.H. 1920. *Wanganui – the river town of New Zealand*. Wanganui Borough Council, Wanganui.

³ *Wanganui Coronation Souvenir*, 1911.

⁴ Stowell, L. 2011. "Old School Ties." *Heritage: New Zealand Winter 2011* pp.30-5..

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.; Wikipedia 2012 - "Wanganui Collegiate School."; *Wanganui Chronicle* 10/04/1909.

⁸ *Wanganui Chronicle* 10/04/1909.

⁹ Stowell, L. 2011.

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were enrolled.¹⁰ The Maori children mostly ran away, finding school discipline irksome.¹¹

Six years after opening the Native School closed to Europeans in order to encourage more Maori pupils, and the European children were transferred back to the old Church School until the establishment of the Government's "common school".¹² The Native School was renamed as the Wanganui Industrial School.¹³ In the early 1860s the Headmaster's house and other parts of the endowment school burnt down and the funds to rebuild them were apportioned to other schools in Wellington.¹⁴ A new headmaster's house was built in 1865 and Henry Godwin was appointed as the new headmaster.¹⁵ The new house was burnt down shortly afterwards.¹⁶ Godwin transformed the school into a private boy's collegiate school, based on staunchly English traditions.¹⁷

In 1878, following the resignation of Henry Godwin, Dr. Saunders was appointed the new headmaster to the renamed Wanganui Collegiate School.¹⁸ A new large schoolroom was built in 1879.¹⁹ In 1880 Mrs Saunders presented the school with its colours – light blue and black.²⁰

The school grew steadily in the 1880s under Rev. Bache Wright Harvey (1882 - 1887) to between 70 and 80 boys, drawn mainly from the local farms.²¹ The growth continued under Mr Walter Empson, who took charge in 1887 and Rev. J. Ll. Dove, who took over in 1909.²² By this time the school has 200 boys.²³

In 1906 the residents of Wanganui wanted to utilize some of the valuable endowment school land along the main street and the decision was made by the

¹⁰ *Wanganui Chronicle* 10/04/1909.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Stowell, L. 2011. Wikipedia 2012.

¹⁸ *Wanganui Chronicle* 10/04/1909.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ *Wanganui Coronation Souvenir*, 1911; Stowell, L. 2011.

²² Ibid; *Wanganui Chronicle* 10/04/1909.

²³ *Wanganui Coronation Souvenir*, 1911.

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school trustees on the 7th November 1907 to rebuild the school on 43 acres on the seaward side of the railway in Liverpool Street.²⁴ On May 7th 1908, an application was made to the Supreme Court for powers to borrow £35,000 for building and equipping the new school.²⁵ Messrs Atkins and Bacon, architects of Wellington and Wanganui, were unanimously appointed for the design of the new school buildings.²⁶ The new buildings included the Big School, a great hall and administration complex named after one of the original buildings with classrooms for 300 boys; a headmaster's house; a geography theatre; chemical laboratories; an art school and a library; gymnasium; carpenter's shop; boarding houses – Grey (after Governor Grey), Selwyn (after Bishop Selwyn), Hadfield and Wallis, with accommodation for 200 boys;²⁷ a domestic block, including dining hall, kitchen and servants' quarters (later turned into the library); and separate accommodation for married masters.²⁸ The grounds included cricket grounds and football fields, five courts, tennis courts and golf links as well as a swimming pool.²⁹

The foundation stone was laid by Lord Plunket on the 13th April 1909.³⁰ The inscription, finished in gold, read “AD GLORIAM DEI – UT ROBUR FIRMITEM INCREMENTUM ACCIPERET - SCHOLA DE ECCLESIA ET REPUBLICA DIU BENE MERITA – HOC NOVAE DOMUS FUNDAMENTUM JECIT – WILLELMUS BARO PLUNKET NOVAE ZELANDIAE PROCONSUL – ID. APRIL. ANNO DOMINI MCMIX.” (To the Glory of God and to give strength, stability, and enlargement to a school that has long done good service to Church and State, this foundation of the new building was laid New Zealand, April 13, 1909).

The new school was officially opened at Easter in 1911 by Lord Islington.³¹ At the same ceremony, the foundation stone for a chapel was laid.³² The chapel had

²⁴ Ibid. *Wanganui Chronicle* 10/04/1909

²⁵ *Wanganui Chronicle* 10/04/1909

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ A; Bolith, H.H. 1920; *Wanganui Chronicle* 10/04/1909

²⁸ *Wanganui Coronation Souvenir*, 1911; *Wanganui Chronicle* 10/04/1909

²⁹ *Wanganui Coronation Souvenir*, 1911

³⁰ *Wanganui Chronicle* 10/04/1909.

³¹ *Wanganui Coronation Souvenir*, 1911; Stowell, L. 2011; *Wanganui Herald* 13/04/1909; *Wanganui Chronicle* 13/4/1911.

³² *Evening Post* 18/3/1911..

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been donated by the Old Boys Association.³³ Nicholas Meuli was awarded the contract for building the chapel for just over £4,000.³⁴ The actual opening of the school was the beginning of the next school term, on 26th May.³⁵

In 1927 a preparatory school was also added, named St George's.³⁶ After the 1931 Napier earthquake, the school's parapets and rooflines were altered and wooden beams were added to the Big School for safety.³⁷ Further earthquake strengthening work was carried out on the Big School in the 1980s.³⁸

A new dining hall and a science block and boarding house were added in the 1960s and 1970s.³⁹ The school roll peaked in the mid-1970s at about 550 boys.⁴⁰

Changing attitudes to the traditional English model and falling rolls saw girls admitted for the first time in 1980 to St George's Preparatory School, and in 1991 to the Collegiate itself.⁴¹ Three new boarding houses were eventually built for the girls at the western end of the grounds.⁴² The school was fully co-educational by 1999.

In 1988, the Chapel was reinforced and enlarged by old boy and architect Bruce Dickson. The process won a New Zealand Institute of Architects National Award in the category of conservation and preservation.⁴³

In 2004, the school celebrated its 150th anniversary.⁴⁴

Famous old boys include Governor General Sir Arthur Porritt, All Black Captain David Kirk, business leader Sir Ron Trotter.⁴⁵ Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex, also spent two terms in 1982 at the school as a junior master.⁴⁶

³³ Stowell, L. 2011.

³⁴ *Evening Post* 18/3/1911.

³⁵ *Wanganui Chronicle* 13/4/1911

³⁶ Stowell, L. 2011.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ NZHPT Registry Entry No. 999 –Wanganui Collegiate Chapel; Stowell, A. 2011.

⁴⁴ Wikipedia 2012.

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Architect/Designer: Atkins & Bacon (architects); Meuli (builder)

History of changes:

Date Period: 1910s

Rarity / Special Features: The group of college buildings is one of a number of boarding school campuses throughout New Zealand but as one of the oldest schools in New Zealand, it is rare.

Representativeness: The extensive grounds and range of building types comprising the school are typical of boarding school campuses, such as Christ's College and Nelson College but those at Wanganui Collegiate have homogeneity.

Diversity (Form and Features): The group of buildings have been designed as a homogenous secondary boarding school campus with the early buildings either side of a main access road, with key buildings of this being the chapel, the boarding schools, the pavilion, the headmaster's house, the big school, and Marris house. Other more recent buildings have respected the quality of the earlier buildings.

Integrity: From cursory visual inspections, the buildings appear to be in reasonable condition.

Context/Group Value: The buildings are a significant grouping of secondary school buildings with key elements being a consistency of architectural style, form, materials, age and scale.

Fragility / Vulnerability: As mainly masonry buildings, they are vulnerable to earthquake damage

Summary of Significance:

⁴⁵ Stowell, L. 2001.

⁴⁶ Wikipedia 2012.

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Archaeological Qualities

Not known.

Architectural Qualities

The group of 1911 buildings has been well designed, using good quality materials and craftsmanship, they are consistent stylistically and each building has been sited on the campus for proximity to key buildings such as the chapel and Big School as well as the nearby playing fields. The Arts and Crafts style chosen for the main buildings are appropriate for a boarding school as it contributes a sense of homeliness and warmth and solidity as well as a reference to England, from where the school system was imported.

A key building in the campus is the Chapel, which is one of Wanganui's most precious buildings with a design of the highest quality and which has produced an inspiring and landmark interior space.

The siting of the boarding houses allows for large green spaces to their north for recreation while a number of the buildings look out onto the extensive grounds on the south corner of the site.

Each of the early buildings was designed by significant Wellington and Wanganui architects, Atkins and Bacon

Historic Qualities

As one of the oldest schools in New Zealand, the school is associated with the earliest and continuing development of schooling in New Zealand. Its founding reflects the concern Governor Grey had for early education in the new colony, particularly "the education of children of the poor and destitute persons, being inhabitants of islands in the Pacific". The school is associated with Christ's College being the only other endowed secondary school, which was not covered by the Section 89 of the Education Act.

The school has had a number of significant alumni including:

Rebecca Scown - Gold Medallist rower

Earl Bamber - professional motor racing driver

Robin Cooke, Baron Cooke of Thorndon - Law Lord

Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex

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Volker Heine - physicist

Joline Henry - Silver Fern netballer

Nichkhun Horvejkul - member of Korean pop band 2PM

Jimmy Hunter - member of The Original All Blacks

David Kirk - All Black World Cup winning captain, and former Chief Executive of Fairfax Media

Patrick Marshall - 1881 to 1889(?)

Arthur Porritt, Baron Porritt - former Governor-General of New Zealand

John Scott - former Director-General of the Fiji Red Cross

Ratu Sir Lala Sukuna - Fijian statesman

Historical Pattern – The place is associated with broad patterns of local or national history, including development and settlement patterns, early or important transportation routes, social or economic trends and activities.

Scientific Qualities

The building materials and recent strengthening of the chapel have scientific interest.

Technical Qualities

As discussed above, the school buildings of 1911 have achieved a high and consistent quality of architectural design, materials craftsmanship and setting.

Cultural Qualities

As a school with nearly 160 years of history, it has significant sentimental values for past and current students, masters and parents. The campus and college are intimately associated with the history and development of Wanganui and Wanganui's citizens are rightly proud of its existence and achievements.

Reference Source:

Bolith, H.H. 1920. *Wanganui – the river town of New Zealand*. Wanganui Borough Council, Wanganui.

Wanganui Coronation Souvenir, 1911. Wanganui Chronicle Co. Ltd.

Wikipedia 2012 - "Wanganui Collegiate School." -

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wanganui_Collegiate (11/3/2012).

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NZHPT Registry Entry No. 999 –“Wanganui Collegiate Chapel”

Stowell, L. 2011. “Old School Ties.” *Heritage: New Zealand Winter 2011* pp.30-5.

Wanganui Chronicle

Wanganui Herald

Evening Post

Associated Pictures:

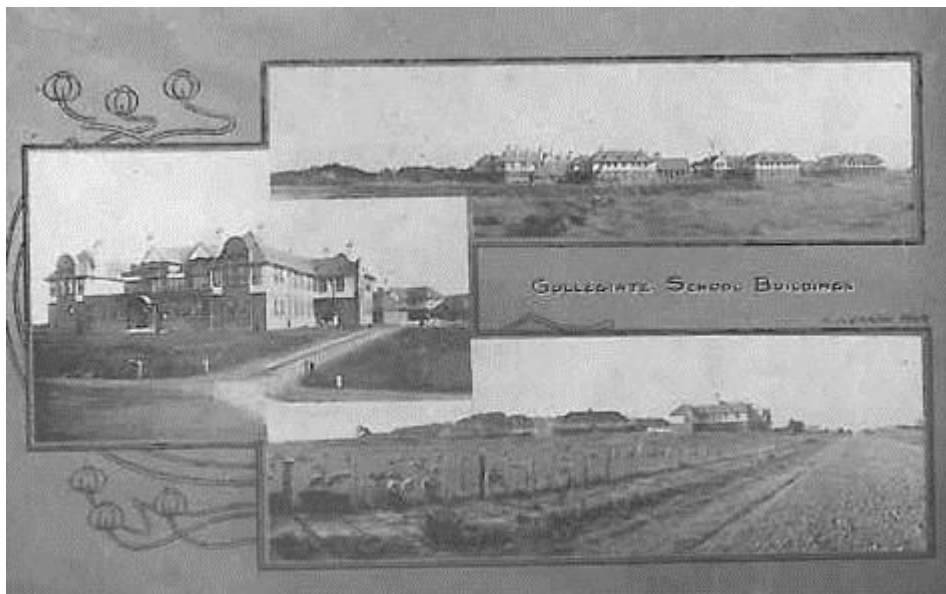


Image from Wanganui Coronation Souvenir, 1911.

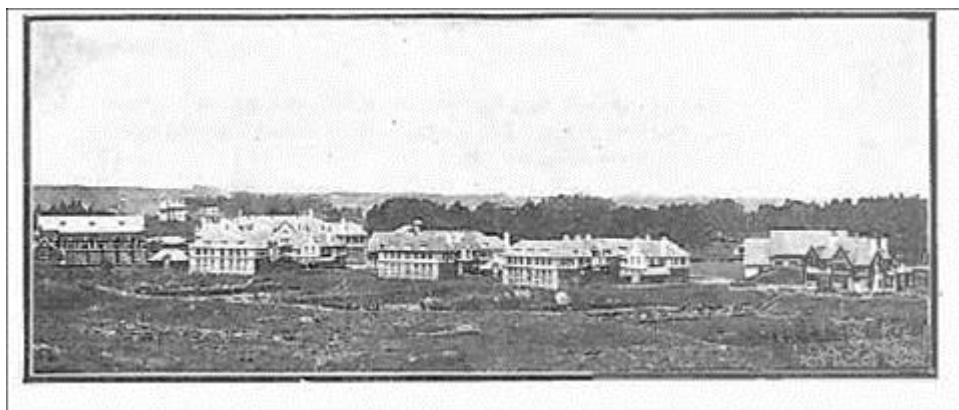
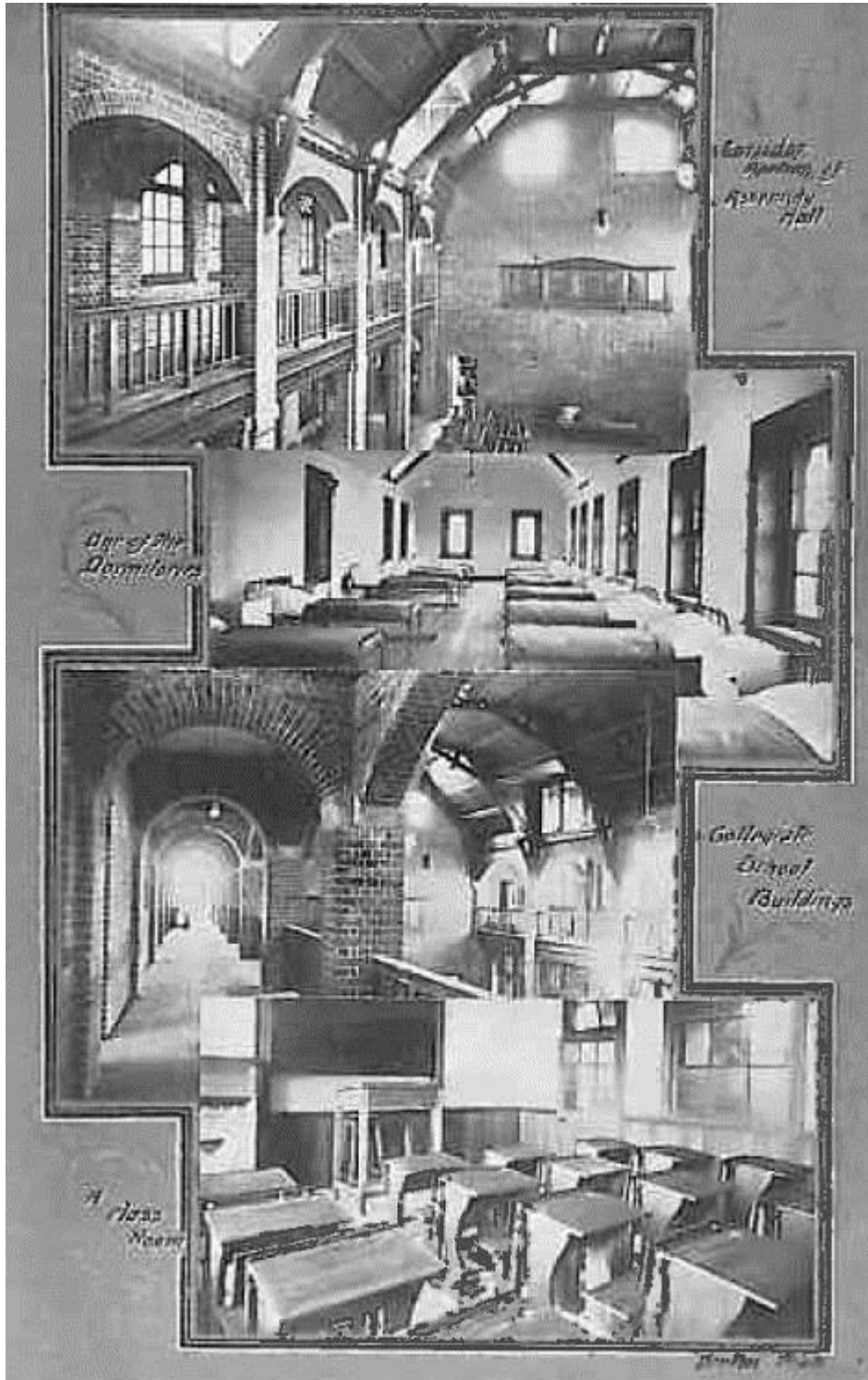


Image from Bolith, H. H, 1920.

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Big School from Wanganui Coronation Souvenir, 1911.

Date of Survey: 2012

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