

Clock Tower



Location: Cooks Garden

Heritage NZ Pouhere Taonga 2

Registration Number: 976

Physical Description: The timber framed, 6m high octagonal clock tower has played timber posts with cross bracing supporting bells at the first level and a tower with a surrounding walkway at the top. The tower has a concave curved roof with metal finial. The walkway is supported on simple angled timber

Register Item Number:

4

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

Built Heritage Inventory



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brackets and underneath it the posts are joined by curved brackets, possibly Classical in design.

Other known names:

Current Use:

Former Uses:

Heritage Status: Heritage NZPT (Cat. 2) **District Plan Class:** Class B

Architectural Style: Neo-Classical **Date of Construction:** 1891

Materials:

Registered owner:

Legal Description: Pt Res H Town of Wanganui

History: The Cooks Garden Clock Tower is located on the site of the old York Stockade, one of the town's defences dating back to the 1850s.¹ By 1870 the stockade had fallen into disrepair and gradually disappeared.² A signal station was built on the site to repeat the signal hoisted at Castlecliff and give the townspeople an indication of the type of vessel entering the port.³

Alongside the signal station was a tower containing the firebell.⁴ Each night the night watchman would climb to the top of the tower and ring the bell if a fire was spotted.⁵ The number of bell strokes would denote the ward in the fire was located.⁶

By June 1891 the tower was reported to be in a state of disrepair and funds were collected for a new tower.⁷ Construction of the tower was let to Thomas H. Battle for the sum of £264.⁸ The original fire bell, a Sheffield bell dated 1874, was moved into the new tower where it still remains.⁹ The firebell became redundant with the introduction of the street fire alarm system.¹⁰

¹ 1990 Wanganui District Heritage Study.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

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After the 1930s earthquakes the post office clock tower was condemned and a new home was found for the chiming clock bells in the fire tower at Cooks Garden.¹¹ The four bells, manufactured by John Taylor and Co., Loughborough, England in 1903, and the chiming mechanism were installed here, while the dial of the clock was erected in Victoria Avenue just below the Maria Place Intersection.¹²

Architect/Designer: T.H. Battle

History of changes:

Date Period: 1890s

Rarity / Special Features:

Integrity: The chiming clock bells were relocated after the 1930's earthquakes to Cooks Garden. The dial of the clock was erected in Victoria Avenue. As a result of the relocation of clock components the values have been compromised.

Representativeness:

Similar to style to the distinctive Pencarrow lighthouses around New Zealand.

Context/Group Value: Associated with early settlement of the town – site of redoubt; and development of communication systems – signal station with port and early fire warning system; associated with Post Office clock. The structure is in close proximity to a number of other significant Wanganui heritage buildings including the Golden Gates, the Ward Observatory, and the Opera House, and two commercial clubs.

Diversity (Form and Features):

Fragility / Vulnerability:

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

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Summary of Significance:

Archaeological Qualities

The lookout tower is a pre-1900 structure and should be considered as an 'archaeological site' as defined by the HPA 1993. The site of the tower also marks an earlier stockade (also an archaeological site).

Architectural Qualities

The clock was designed by well-known local architect Thomas Battle.

Historic Qualities

Site associated with mid-19th century military defence of Wanganui; clock tower associated with the development of communications network between the port and the town, and as an early fire warning system.

Technical Qualities

The structure uses typical materials and methods of construction for the period.

Cultural Qualities

Commemorative association with the former Post Office and Fire Service; High amenity value as located within a public space.

Reference Source:

1990 Wanganui District Heritage Study

Associated Pictures:

Date of Survey: 2012

Prepared by: Ian Bowman & Nick Cable