

Standard Chain Measure



Location: Market Place; Taupo Quay; **Heritage NZ Pouhere Taonga**
Bates Street, Moutoa Gardens, **List Number:** 7101
Moutoa Gardens, Whanganui

Physical Description: The Standard Chain Mark, originally called a monument, comprises a strip of concrete lain in the ground with square concrete blocks at either end into which brass plates are laid. The north brass plate has two projections into which one end of the chain was inserted and the other end comprises a plate with a line inscribed showing the exact dimension of one chain. The strip has impressed into the concrete "N.Z. SURVEYS CHAIN STANDARD 1880 66 FEET". The concrete has a variable thickness of cement render on top.

The Wanganui chain is set in a gravel bed with a timber frame.

Other known names:

Current Use: Standard chain

Former Uses:

Register Item Number:

63

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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Heritage Status: Heritage NZPT List **District Plan Class:** Class A

(Cat. 1)

Architectural Style: Nil

Date of Construction: 1880

Materials: Concrete, brass

Registered owner:

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

History: Wanganui's Standard Chain Mark was a technological revolution in its time. It was laid down in Moutoa Gardens within 12 months of New Zealand's first standard chain mark being placed at Wellington's Government Buildings in 1879.

The chain mark introduced new standards of accurate measurement to the Wanganui region and ensured local measurements met a national standard. Prior to 1879 there had been no uniform method of surveying in the nine provinces of New Zealand and no uniform standard of qualification for surveyors. When the Office of the Surveyor-General was established after the abolition of the provinces in 1876, one of its first tasks was to standardise surveying measurements throughout the country.

The Standard Chain Mark at Moutoa Gardens was designed and built by the Department of Lands and Survey in 1880 and was fixed in position under the direction of Wanganui's first District Surveyor, John Annabel. It consists of a concrete strip laid down on top of the ground with a concrete block about 30 cm square at either end. Each of the blocks is surmounted by a square brass plate. The distance between the two brass plates is 100 links, or one chain. Surveyors used a standard chain mark to establish the correct length of one chain for their own equipment. The Wanganui Standard Chain Mark could accommodate both old and new forms of the surveyor's equipment - that is Gunter chains and steel tapes respectively. It was first used in 1880 to draw up a plan for the newly formed Wanganui Harbour Board. Standard chain marks were also used as the starting point for the government survey - known as a standard survey - and the first Wanganui standard survey was carried out in June 1883. By 1901 the standard chain mark was no longer in general use, surpassed by changes in technology.

By the early 1970s the Standard Mark had become obscured by grass. In 1972

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the Wanganui City Council, at the request of the Whanganui Historical Society, uncovered the mark and placed a plaque alongside it.

Wanganui's Standard Chain Mark is significant as a rare example of surveying technology used in nineteenth century New Zealand. It is associated with a new government policy, following the abolition of the provinces in 1876, to introduce and standardise the surveying profession in New Zealand. At the local level it brought a standardisation of surveying to Wanganui and was a key element in the standard survey of the city. It is also associated with Wanganui's first District Surveyor, John Annabel.

Architect/Designer: Dept. of Lands & Survey / John Annabel

History of changes:

Original Construction - Laid out: 1880

Other - Fixed as a survey mark: 1883

Other - Damaged: 1995

Date Period: 1880

Rarity / Special Features: The chain mark is one of three in New Zealand known to be extant with the others in Nelson and Wellington.

Integrity: The chain mark has weeds growing in the gravel bed.

Representativeness: The chain mark is a standard instrument to ensure consistency in surveying lengths.

Context/Group Value: There are two other chain marks in new Zealand, in Nelson and Wellington.

Diversity (Form and Features):

Fragility / Vulnerability: Being located in a public park, it is potentially vulnerable to vandalism.

Summary of Significance:

Archaeological Qualities

Being in place in 1880, its location is an archaeological site under the Historic Places Act 1993.

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Historic Qualities

The Chain Mark is associated with the surveying profession in New Zealand, particularly to create land titles and was for surveyors to ensure their measures were a standard length of one chain, 100 links, or 66 feet. The Chain Marks were also used as the starting point for Government Surveys. The first Government standard survey in Wanganui took place in 1883 and is associated with Wanganui's first District Surveyor, John Annabel.

Scientific Qualities

The chain mark is of historic scientific interest in the surveying industry.

Technical Qualities

The chain mark was technologically significant enabling surveyors to use a standardised unit of length whilst surveying.

Reference Source:

ID 7101, NZ Historic Places Trust: www.historic.govt.nz

Associated Pictures:

Date of Survey: 2012

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