

Roots House (Dwelling)



Location: 107 Springvale Road, Whanganui
Heritage NZ Pouhere Taonga List Number: nil

Physical Description: This storey and a half, timber framed cottage is designed in the Georgian box cottage style with symmetrical front elevation of entry door and window either side on the ground floor with gabled dormers above the windows. A bull nosed verandah extends across the front of the house and has fretwork brackets to moulded posts. The main ridge of the gabled roof runs north south and a long lean-to extends from it to the rear of the house. There are simple finials to the apex of each of the gables.

Other known names:

Current Use: house

Former Uses:

Heritage Status: District Plan Class: Class B

Architectural Style: Georgian box cottage
Date of Construction: 1866

Materials: Painted timber shiplap weatherboards, boxed corners and joinery, corrugated steel roofing

Register Item Number:

73

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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Registered owner: R.M. & A. G. I. Jenkins

Legal Description: Lot 3 DP 61304

History: Roots House is named after early settlers Thomas and Mary Roots.¹ The Roots came to New Zealand in the *HMS Alma* in 1857, arriving in Wellington.² From there they walked up the coast to Wanganui, joining the other pioneers who established the settlement at Wanganui.³

In May 1866 Thomas Roots purchased 4.5 hectares of the higher ground towards Tayforth from Messrs Taylor and Watt and established a modest farm.⁴ At the time of their arrival, a large part of Springvale was swamp land with a small flax mill run by the Parkes family.

During the 1860s fighting broke out between the European settlers and Maori, who were dissatisfied with occupation of the land by the Europeans and road building activities.⁵ The southern Taranaki tribes attacked isolated homesteads, destroyed crops and drove away stock.⁶ Early in 1865, military authorities stationed at Wanganui began to establish a series of redoubts at strategic positions along the Wanganui River, where Hauhau forces could be met and engaged at a distance from the fledgling town.⁷ During 1867 and 1868, British forces, under the command of General Cameron, campaigned against the Hauhau leader, Titokowaru.⁸ The Hauhaus retreated to the hinterland in 1868 and as far as the settlement of Wanganui was concerned, the war was over.⁹

During the period of unrest, the Roots family looked to protect themselves from Maori raiding parties. They dug a deep tunnel in the hill beside the house and lined it with planks.¹⁰ A cannon was placed at the entrance.¹¹ It is not known whether the cannon was ever used, but cannonballs have been found near the

¹ Wanganui City Council, n.d. *Historic Places, Wanganui*. Prepared by the Town Planning Department, Wanganui City Council.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. *Wanganui Herald* 3/06/1907.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Smart, M.J. G. & A.P. Bates, 1972. *The Wanganui Story*. Wanganui Newspapers, Wanganui. Pp.162-163.

⁶ Smart & Bates p.163.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Wanganui City Council n.d.

¹¹ Ibid.

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entrance.¹²

After the war, Thomas Roots was appointed foreman for the Waitotara County Council for a number of years and responsible for a great deal of the roadworks in the area.¹³ Prior to this, he was not only a farmer but also a well-known contractor who was responsible for the construction of the Wesleyan Church at Springvale in 1866.¹⁴ He was also the Sunday School superintendent for many years.¹⁵ Mrs Roots grew strawberries and raspberries to sell in the markets in Wanganui.¹⁶

When Thomas Roots died in August 1912, his son Isaac inherited the property.¹⁷ Isaac Roots was farming at Mataroa at the time and moved back to the Springvale house where he lived out the rest of his life.¹⁸ The property fell into disrepair after Isaac's death until it was purchased by J. Taylor in 1950.¹⁹ Taylor was responsible for a great deal of the restoration of the house.²⁰

The house was originally two-roomed, and over time increased to about 140 square meters.²¹ The roof shingles were covered and eventually replaced by corrugated iron.²² Timber piles were made from kauri, totara and Australian jarrah and puriri.²³

Architect/Designer:

History of changes:

Date Period: 1860s

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ *Wanganui Chronicle* 6/08/1912.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Wanganui City Council n.d.

¹⁷ Ibid. *Wanganui Chronicle* 6/08/1912.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

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Rarity / Special Features: A very early example of European housing in the District associated with a prominent early family.

Integrity: The house fell into disrepair in the early 1900's but has been substantially restored but there have been substantial alterations and additions to the building.

Representativeness: Highly representative of a Georgian box cottage of the period.

Context/Group Value: The fortifications undertaken on the site to protect the family from early European/Maori skirmishes adds an extra level of historic interest and value.

Diversity (Form and Features):

Fragility / Vulnerability:

Summary of Significance:

Archaeological Qualities

The building is pre-1900 and should be considered as an 'archaeological site' as defined by the HPA 1993. The site itself shows interesting fortifications where the roots constructed a deep tunnel beside the house. It is unknown whether any fighting occurred at the site but cannonballs have been located in the vicinity.

Architectural Qualities

This is a very early one and a half storey Georgian box cottage building dating back to 1860. It has a symmetrical street elevation with a bullnose verandah. Fretwork and finials refer to a Gothic tradition. The design is typical for a gabled Georgian box cottage but includes a substantial single pitched lean-to. The lean-to is a more recent addition/adaptation

Historic Qualities

The home is a good example of early settlement having been the home of Thomas and Mary Roots who settled in the late 1850's. Thomas roots was responsible for infrastructure development particularly roading in the District as well as being a contractor associated with the construction of the Wesleyan Church at Springvale. He played a role in both economic and spiritual life in the District.

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Smart, M.J. G. & A.P. Bates, 1972. *The Wanganui Story*. Wanganui Newspapers, Wanganui

Associated Pictures:

Date of Survey: 2012

Prepared by: Ian Bowman and Nick Cable