

Kemp Monument



Location: Market Place, Taupo Quay, Moutoa Gardens, Whanganui

Heritage NZ Pouhere Taonga
List Number: 165

Physical Description: The monument is composed of a marble statue on top of a square columned shaft and stepped plinth with cement rendered steps at ground level. The upper square columned section is constructed of polished granite with inscriptions and the central plinth, also of granite has bronze relief

Register Item Number:

20

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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panels. The base steps have a small marble tablet with the sculptor's name identified.

Other known names: Guy Fawkes Statue, Moutoa Gardens Kemp Memorial, Te Rangihwinui Monument

Current Use: Memorial

Former Uses: Memorial

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

(Cat. 1)

Architectural Style: Classical **Date of Construction:** 1911 memorial with stepped based and statue

Materials: marble, granite, cement render, bronze, marble with lead lettering

Registered owner:

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

History: This monument, situated in Moutoa Gardens, in Whanganui, commemorates the Muaupoko leader Te Rangihwinui, also known as Taitako and later as Te Keepa, or Major Kemp. It was erected after his death by his sister Rora Hakaraia, and the New Zealand Government in 1911.

Te Keepa rose to prominence through his support of the Crown in the New Zealand Wars of the 1860s, leading a troop of Wanganui Maori. For his service to the Crown Te Keepa was presented with the Queen's Sword of Honour in June 1869, and was awarded the New Zealand Cross in 1874 and the New Zealand War Medal in 1876. His military skill and ability to lead was also well respected in Maoridom, and he was acknowledged as a person with high mana. In later life he served as an Assessor for the Maori Land Court, and land purchase officer. He died on 15 April 1898.

The plinth of the Te Keepa monument is of Aberdeen granite and is surmounted by a life-sized figure of Te Keepa sculptured in Italian marble by the Frank Harris Granite Co. in Auckland. The four panels around the base depict the four major engagements Major Kemp took part in during the wars of 1866 to 1870: the battle of Moturoa on 7 November 1866; the surprise at Pungarehu on 6 October 1866; Storming of Te Kooti's pa, Te Porere on 3 October 1869; and the battle at Mapa Marae with Major Poatu on 13 March 1870. There is also a

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tribute from Major George Whitmore, who as Commander of the New Zealand Constabulary Force (1868-1869) led the campaign against Te Kooti and Titokowaru, and an extract from Colonel Gudgeon's book, *Defenders of New Zealand*.

The significance of the monument rests partly on its association with a key figure in the New Zealand Wars. Te Keepa was arguably the most important of the Maori soldiers who supported the Government. It also has symbolic significance for the location - Moutoa Gardens is the site of many New Zealand Wars memorials and a place of great cultural significance to Maori and Pakeha.

The Statue

The plan to erect the statue dates to shortly after Major Kemp's 1898 death. The *Wanganui Chronicle* of 13 December 1899 (p, 2) recorded that the monument's design had been approved by the Wanganui Borough Council. It was to be erected in the "*Market Square Gardens*", which was the site selected by Kemp's daughter Victoria. The statue was to be of marble, life size, and set on a pedestal of Melbourne bluestone with concrete steps. The full height was to be 15ft 6ins.

Some years then passed, and finally in June 1912, the *Wanganui Chronicle* reported that the statue was approaching completion and that it had been paid for with public and private contributions. The statue was now to stand 20ft high, with the base about 9ft square. The pedestal was now of Coromandel granite, crowned by a life-sized marble figure worked in marble. "*Besides voluminous inscriptions on solid marble blocks, there are being carved in bronze four elaborate scenes depicting four great battles from which the gallant major emerged with wreaths of glory...*"The article then went on to describe the text.

The monument was the work of the Auckland firm, Messrs. Frank Harris & Co., of Auckland, and was primarily being paid for by Kemp's sister Hihiko-i-Terangi. It was also probably to be exhibited at the industries exhibition in Auckland prior to being sent down to Wanganui.¹

In August 1912, a new company, the Frank Harris Granite Co. had just been formed to purchase the firms Frank Harris & Co, Auckland, the New Zealand

¹ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 19 June 1912, p. 7

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Granite Quarries Ltd. (in liquidation) and also the monumental mason business of Frank Harris, of Auckland, Gisborne and Palmerston (sic), along with several other similar businesses.² The Kemp memorial thus derived from an unclear transition of firms.

The date of the unveiling of this monument is also unclear, however, the Frank Harris & Co. considered that their role was completed by 26 September 1912. That, though, was just the beginning.

The written order to create the monument was dated 25 July 1911, and was for the sum of £1,000. Then in November 1911, the order was increased to include additional inscriptions, making a total of £1,150. Two payments totalling £550 were made and in the course of this time, Frank Harris & Co. was placed in liquidation. The problems grew from the remaining £600 and soon the liquidators of Frank Harris & Co. took Rora Hakaraia (Kemp's sister) to court for non-payment, while she in turn counter-claimed a refund of the money already paid as she stated that the monument was not a likeness of Major Kemp; that it was made in Auckland and not Italy; and that the base was made of Coromandel stone and not Aberdeen granite. Her claim also stated that the whole of the work had been done badly and did not comply with the terms of the contract. Offers were made to re-do the work, but that fell through also.

The resulting court case (in Palmerston North) and subsequent appeal against its decision (Wellington) provide an array of information on the actual statue. The sculptor chosen to undertake the carving of the statue was William Henry Feldon, of Auckland, one of only two men in the country deemed capable of doing this work. Photos of Kemp were requested, to which Rora referred the firm to an oil painting of Kemp at the Wanganui Museum. Six samples of granite were offered and the preferred one was Aberdeen granite.³

Viewpoints varied on the statue, with the caretaker at Moutoa Gardens stating that he served in the war with Kemp and thought the statue represented Kemp's likeness at that time. Also he had seen many Maori looking at it and their only objection was that it was white. He considered it a good likeness. A photograph

² *Evening Post*, 22 August 1912, p. 2. See also, *Poverty Bay Herald*, 19 June 1913, p. 4; and *Observer*, 25 October 1913, p. 22

³ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 29 May 1913, p. 8

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of the painting the statue was made from, was also shown in court, and the changes of whiskers and skin tone were considered to have complicated matters as to people's perception of the statue.

The sculptor, William Henry Feldon, was also interviewed. He had been in the profession since 1884, and in New Zealand for three years. He had prepared the bust of Kemp, in Oamaru stone, taken from a photo of Kemp seated. He considered the bust a good likeness, but said there had been problems, as the photos supplied did not provide a profile or a full face. He did not think Italian sculptors could have done better. Someone else had sculptured the legs, arms and back, and he had not seen the completed statue, but from a photograph thought that everyone should be proud of it. Feldon thought the *"New Zealand granites were superior to the Scotch or any other granites in every way. The colour was prettier, and there was more weight in the stone."* The bust was also produced in court. However, when shown photos of the whole statue, Feldon remarked that the pose of the figure was "rotten", and that if he had made it, he wouldn't have expected to have been paid for it either.⁴

The result of the first court case (which found in favour of the company) was set aside in September 1913 and a new case ordered by Justice Chapman who also agreed that the statue was not a good likeness.⁵ Finally in June 1914, judgement was given in an appeal against the decision of Mr Justice Chapman to grant a new trial, with the complex result reported as: *"The appeal was dismissed, and the judgement was ordered to be entered in the action for the defendant, but the appellants' rights in regard to the substituted contract and the defendant's rights in regard to the counter-claim were expressly left over."*⁶

This matter was not researched further. Additional research doubtless will reveal the ultimate outcome of this debate.

Architect/Designer: Unknown

History of changes:

Date Period: 1911

⁴ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 29 May 1913, p. 8

⁵ *Evening Post*, 6 September 1913, p. 6

⁶ *Evening Post*, June 1914, p. 3

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Rarity / Special Features: The memorial to one of the most important Maori soldiers to support the Government is one of several in Whanganui dedicated to the New Zealand wars.

Integrity: The memorial is in a fair state needing maintenance and repairs.

Representativeness: The memorial is representative of similar memorials for the period.

Context/Group Value: The statue is situated within Pakaitore/Moutoa Gardens, a place of deep significance to local Maori which has a number of other highly significant memorials.

Diversity (Form and Features):

Fragility / Vulnerability: As a monument in a public park, there is the potential for vandalism.

Summary of Significance:

Archaeological Qualities

The monument is pre-1900 and should be considered an archaeological site under the Historic Places Act 1993.

Architectural Qualities

The statue is a likeness of Te Keepa and was sculpted in Italian marble by the Frank Harris Granite Co. in Auckland.

Historic Qualities

The memorialise dedicated to the life of Muaupoko leader Te Rangihwinui, also known as Taitako and later as Te Keepa, or Major Kemp. He was a highly recognised leader of Whanganui Maori being honoured with the Queen's Sword of Honour in June 1869, and was awarded the New Zealand Cross in 1874 and the New Zealand War Medal in 1876. Te Keepa was considered as one of the most important Maori soldiers to support the Government.

Technical Qualities

The memorial is interesting in its use of Aberdeen granite and Italian marble.

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Cultural Qualities

The memorial has considerable sentimental qualities as a war memorial and has symbolic significance for the location - Moutoa Gardens is the site of many New Zealand Wars memorials and a place of great cultural significance to Maori and Pakeha.

Reference Source:

ID 165, NZ Historic Places Trust website: www.historic.org.nz

Associated Pictures:

Date of Survey: 2012

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