

KLUE RESIDENCE – 277 Kaimatarau Road, Rongotea



Architect: possibly L.G. West

Construction date: 1904?

Visible materials: Painted timber weatherboards and joinery, corrugated steel roofing

Architectural style: Victorian Queen Anne

Use/building type: Residential

Date and compiler: Ian Bowman, December 2014

Heritage New Zealand listing: 2

Proposed category: B

PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY¹

Outline history

Built about 1904 as the family home of Lawrence ('Laurie') and Elizabeth Laurenson, this house spent its first 85 years on the corner of College Street and Victoria Avenue (formerly Alexandra Street) in Palmerston North. A mortgage against the property dated early 1904, may indicate the time of building. By 1905 the property's capital value was £786 while its unimproved value was £286.

The Laurenson family (the father also being named Lawrence Laurenson) emigrated from the Shetland Islands aboard the 'Avalanche' in 1875. The family moved to Palmerston North in 1879, and Laurie Laurenson II became a carpenter and building contractor. He built a number of houses in the district, as well as the Anglican church at Stanway.

Laure II and Elizabeth lived in a small cottage in Alexandra Street, diagonally opposite the land that became 451 College Street. Laurie III was born in this cottage in 1897. In 1902 Laurie II bought Lots 1 to 5 of Suburban Section 1077 (or DP 1242), most of which fronted College Street. Lots 1 and 2 were

¹ Former NZHPT Manawatu Branch Committee files

transferred to architect Ludolph Georg West in 1903 and Lot 3 to Aileen Laurenson in 1915. This house was built on Lots 4 and 5.

The designer of the house is unknown and Laurie II, who built the house, may have had the skills to design it himself as has been suggested. However, in 1903 land transaction with L G West provides grounds to suspect L G West could have designed it. The shared Scandinavian ancestry, and West's status amongst the Scandinavian community of the day, adds to this possibility. This house does not appear in West's surviving architectural records, although the most detailed of these records begin with 1904. West built his own home on the land he obtained from Laurenson.

At about the same time as Laurie II built this house, he turned from building for a living to farming on a large scale. He took up several leasehold and freehold properties, at least one of which was in the Tokomaru area. He also speculated heavily on livestock for these properties. In 1908, financial pressures associated with his speculation, low resale prices for the livestock, and, as a result, insomnia became too much for him. He committed suicide while on a visit to the Tokomaru property.

Elizabeth and her five children, the oldest of whom was then 15, remained at College Street. When Elizabeth died in 1922, the house was transferred jointly to James Laurenson (Laurie II's brother) and Laurie Laurenson III, as executors. It was transferred to Laurie III alone in 1937.

Laurie III became a very well-known lawyer in Palmerston North where he practiced for over 60 years. He had joined the old legal firm, Innes and Oakley as a clerk in 1916 and, after a short period in the army in 1918, he qualified as a barrister in 1921. He became a partner in the firm in 1924 and had a distinguished career at the bar, taking in a wide variety of cases. He was twice President of the Manawatu Law Society. At the time of his death in 1979 aged 81, his partner in the firm, John McFarlane, described him as a "gentleman of real dignity whose word was his bond, a man who had a great regard for ethics, and a professional man who was able to temper the law with humanity" (Evening Standard: 9/10/1979).

Laurie III married Muriel Pacey in 1924, the couple having two children. The sunroom attached to the main bedroom was built when Muriel contracted tuberculosis. She died in 1943.

In 1979 the house passed to Laurie III's widow, his second wife, Mavis, and it was she who sought to have it registered as a historic building. In 1987 Mavis moved to another home, and this house remained vacant. Although she attempted to maintain the half-acre garden, the house is remembered for its unoccupied appearance. Mavis describes the house as very well built, but basic. It did not have the fancy things that other houses of its type had. For the first ten or so years after their 1956 marriage, she had continued to use the old coal range assisted by a small electric cooker.

Sold to Dolmite Holdings after being empty for 18 months, that company in turn sold the house for removal to David and Fiona Carey. During September 1989, Britton House movers transported both house and car shed to Kaimatarau Road. The original coal range was reinstalled in the house in 1990-1. The Careys also built a verandah at the back of the house where previously there were only steps to the back door. New houses have now been built on the former section in Palmerston North.

The Klues bought the house in 1993 and since then have done renovations aimed at restoring it. This has included removing hardboard from the kitchen walls to reveal the old tongue-and-groove lining, and reinstalling three fireplaces, although they connected these to flues instead of chimneys. The wall between the kitchen and the hall has also been removed. They have repaired and painted the exterior

of the house, while the car shed, that had included the laundry (with copper) and another room, is now a double car shed.

The house's eight finials remain in place, but iron cresting from above the bay windows was removed prior to 1956. Mavis Laursen wonders if the cresting was removed following an earthquake that she understands toppled the house's two tall double chimneys. The replacement chimneys had been much shorter.

Possible architect

Ludolph Georg West (1846-1919) was born in Denmark and arrived in New Zealand in 1868 and shortly after arrival settled in Palmerston North. He married the daughter of a Johnsonville settler called Bannister. His first wife died in 1891 and he remarried in 1894. It was some years before West set up in practice as an architect but, in conjunction with his son Ernst Vilhem, he was responsible for a large number of Palmerston North's buildings. Among those still standing designed by the practice are the Former Club Hotel (1905), the Manawatu-Kilwinning Masonic Lodge (1908), the Old Soldiers Club (1917), the Church of Christ Scientist (1931) and Ward Brothers Building (1935). George West (he Anglicised his name) was Mayor from 1886-87, a borough Councillor and a prominent freemason. His son Ernst was a borough Councillor 1921-25.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Planning

The single storey timber framed building has a rectangular plan with a main gabled wing running north south. At right angles to the main wing are lower gable roofs, some with shallow extensions, and bay windows. Verandahs wrap around the north east corner between extensions, and another between the central bay window and north west corner. The house has a lean-to at the rear.

No plans of the building have been sighted and the inspection of the house was from the exterior only.

Style

The house was designed in the Victorian Queen Anne style. Queen Anne was a revival style of late 17th and 18th century architecture popularised by British architects Richard Norman Shaw and William Eden Nesfield in the 1870s initially for large country houses. American architects Charles McKim and Henry Hobson Richardson also adapted the style and less academic versions of the American and British styles were used in New Zealand. The style was part of the picturesque movement and the houses were designed to be asymmetrical, with conical towers and tall chimneys to create an interesting skyline and interplay of complex forms. Other key New Zealand characteristics of the style include steeply pitched highly decorated gable forms, half timbering effects, bay windows and wide verandahs. Art Nouveau inspired lead lights were also common with the style.

Construction and materials

The house has rusticated weatherboards, timber double hung sash windows and four panelled doors. The front door has the top two panels glazed and has glazed and panelled sidelights and toplights. The interior was not able to be inspected, although it was apparent through windows that original elements such as four panelled doors, skirtings and architraves have been retained. The house has decorative gable screens, finials, eaves brackets, chamfered verandah posts and curved brackets. The south facing roof has a small gabled vent with louvres.

Setting

The house is set back from the highway and is accessed down a long tree lined road. Large trees surround the section and the area immediately around the house is grassed with paths to the front and side doors.

REVIEW OF REPORT

Based on a review of the report and viewing of Council files, the assessment undertaken in 2014 for this building is still applicable as at April 2021.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE VALUES

The building has **low to moderate local** significance for **physical, historic** and **cultural** heritage values.

The house has **moderate architectural** and **representative** values as an example of the Queen Anne style that exhibits many of the typical characteristics of the style including asymmetry, prominent gables, gable screens, and verandahs with decorative detailing. The tall chimneys, also typical of the style, were demolished.

The house has **moderate** design, materials and craftsmanship **authenticity** but no authenticity of setting, having been relocated from Palmerston North.

The house has **moderate** associations with the Laurensen **family**, who built and lived in it for over 80 years with Laurence Laurensen III a prominent Palmerston North lawyer. The house may also be associated with architect L.G. West

The house has **low educational** values with potential areas of interest including the history of house construction and Scandinavian settlement in the Manawatu.

The house is **statutorily** recognised by being listed with Heritage New Zealand.

SOURCES

Evening Standard: 'Tragedy at Tokomaru', 27/6/1908, 5(1); 'The Tokomaru Tragedy', 29/6/1908, 2(4); funeral/obit 29/6/1908, 4(7); 'Obituary – Lawrence Laurensen', 27/10/1919; 'Wedding, Laurensen-Pacey', 6/6/1924, 7(6); 'Society Honours 4 Old Lawyers', 21/11/1974, 21; 'Lawyer Dies', 9/10/1979, 3.

Wright, E R, & E D Woodhouse, Colonial Homes of Palmerston North, (Wellington, 1975). pp 66-7, incl illustration.

Manawatu District Council; Building Consents Dept., Permit files.

Palmerston North City Council: Building Consents Dept., Permit files for 451 College St; P N City Archives: L G West Papers.

NZ Historic Places Trust, Manawatu Committee Records: File on 451 College St, Palmerston North, including Certificates of Title and a brief history that included a rate book search.

Interviews: Johan Bonnevie, Palmerston North (20/7/1996); Leo Burr, Palmerston North (20/7/1996); David Klue, Rongotea (7/8/1996, 11/8/1996); Mavis Laurensen, Palmerston North (8/8/1996, 21/8/1996); Ian Matheson, Palmerston North (21/7/1996).

VNZ No: 14250/1110

Legal Description: Lot 1 DP 76817

Certificates of Title: Palmerston North site: 123/37 (1902-37), 4588/44 (1937-70).

HPT Manawatu No: 010106 (Formerly registered under the Palmerston North District Scheme as Category 2 on 24/10/1979 due to its "Architectural Significance". It was classified 'C' by the National Building Committee in March 1983. This classification was cancelled in 1989.