

HOUSE – 160 Lethbridge Street



Architect: Unknown, builder probably Hubner family carpentry firm

Construction date: 1883-1893 (approx.)

Visible materials: Painted timber weatherboard, corrugated steel roofing, timber joinery

Architectural style: Victorian saltbox

Use/building type: Residential

Date and compiler: Ian Bowman, December 2014, Val Burr 2019

Heritage New Zealand: -

Proposed category: B

PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY

When Philip Whyte prepared his 'Proposed Register of Objects' in the Feilding Borough in 1980, he recommended 160 Lethbridge Street for a Category 1 registration based on its architectural significance. He believed that the house had been built in about 1878, and described it as an attractive example of an early large cottage. He claimed that it was formerly used as a farm house – although his source for that claim is not given.

Whyte's description of the three-bedroom house was that it was sound, but that its piles needed attention. It was wooden with an iron roof. It had a 10 foot stud, and the ceilings had varnished exposed beams. Some rooms had been modernised with wallboard. Additions appeared to have been made to the back of the house, while the house's third bedroom had been extended onto the verandah and modernised. The kitchen and dining room had also been altered. The owners at the time, Mr and Mrs D.B. McLeod, had told Whyte that they planned to retain as much of the house's original character as possible, while also remedying its existing problems.

Whyte described the house as then being sited on an "*attractively landscaped*" half-acre section, with an old stable being behind the house, along with a well that is covered over.

The house has since received some extensive additions, including an upstairs bedroom, but the original outline of the early house remains apparent.

Early Owners of the Property

Certificate of Title WN17/33 was issued on 22 February 1879 to Francis Matthew Betts, a solicitor of Wanganui. The property covered by this CT then consisted of five acres. There is nothing to indicate that Betts lived on this property, and he appears to have remained associated with Wanganui.¹ After problems in his professional life in the early 1880s, he eventually committed suicide in Canterbury in 1893.²

The property, meanwhile, had been transferred in 1883 to August Hubner, who was described as a carpenter of Feilding - and it is clear that the Hubner family played a significant role in the early history of the house. Whether this property could ever have been regarded as a 'farmhouse' has not been researched beyond noting that the original section was only five acres in size as at 1879. Hubner's obituary, which appeared in the *Feilding Star* of 13 June 1898, included information on the background of this family. The obituary recorded that: "*We regret to announce the death of Mr August Hubner, which took place yesterday morning at his residence, Makino. Mr Hubner and his family arrived in this district in 1875. The late Mr Hubner was a native of Dantzic, Prussia, and was highly respected by a large circle of friends. He leaves a widow, five sons, two of whom are residing in Germany, and one daughter, Mrs Rink, to mourn the loss of an affectionate husband and a kind father. We deeply sympathise with the family in their bereavement. The funeral will take place to-morrow afternoon.*"³

In 1884, the property was transferred to August Hubner's son, George Otto Hubner, who was also described as a carpenter of Feilding. It is not apparent at this stage as to whether the house existed at that time, and certainly George Hubner was still single then. George and his two New Zealand-based brothers were naturalised in 1890, the *Feilding Star* recording that letters of naturalisation had been granted to: "*Emiel Robert Hubner, carpenter, Feilding; John Albert Hubner, carpenter, Feilding; (and) George Otto Hubner, settler, Feilding.*"⁴ The 1892-93 *Wise's Post Office Directory* (p. 855) in fact lists the father and the three sons as all living at Makino. The Hubner family business built many houses and other buildings around Feilding, and it seems likely that they will have also built this house – although no evidence to this effect was noted during this study.

On 29 June 1892, George Otto Hubner married Alice Maude Bird.⁵ Marking the occasion, the *Feilding Star* recorded that: "*Mr G. O. Hubner, the choirmaster of the Feilding Primitive Methodist Church, and Miss Bird, who has assisted as organist, were united in matrimonial bonds last Wednesday. At the social held in the parsonage, the Rev Mr Lyon, on behalf of the Church, presented Mr and Mrs Hubner with an electro-plated butter dish, toast rack, and a jelly dish, saying that the warmest wishes for the married happiness of the newly married pair accompanied the gifts.*"⁶

If the Lethbridge Street house had not existed prior to this time, then it seems likely that it will have been built by the time George and Alice Hubner married. The couple were to have at least four children during the period they owned the house.⁷

¹ For example, *Wanganui Herald*, 5 May 1873, p. 3 'Dissolution of Partnership – Duncan & Betts'; & 5 May 1881, p. 2 'Supreme Court: Andrew Duncan v. F.M. Betts'

² *Hawera & Normanby Star*, 30 May 1893, p. 2; *Wanganui Herald*, 27 September 1893, p. 2

³ *Feilding Star*, 13 June 1898, p. 2

⁴ *Feilding Star*, 9 December 1890, p. 2

⁵ Births, Deaths & Marriages online: <https://www.bdmonline.dia.govt.nz/> : Ref: 1892/1071

⁶ *Feilding Star*, 2 July 1892, p. 2

⁷ Births, Deaths & Marriages online: <https://www.bdmonline.dia.govt.nz/> : Ref: 1893/14041, 1896/8800, 1907/3279 and 1908/8567

Although the Hubner family was only lightly researched, other events located include the destruction by fire in 1909 of a ten-roomed house in Feilding that was owned by George Hubner (but occupied by W. Durrell) – the house being insured for £400.⁸ A five-bedroom house at Makino occupied by “Jack” Hubner (John Albert?) was then burnt down in 1912.⁹

Possibly this house was also rented out by George Hubner in the latter stage of his ownership of it (at least). For example the *Wise’s Directory* for 1916 (pp. 386 & 1251) lists George Otto Hubner, described as a carpenter, as living in Camden Street. “*Mr Hubner, Camden Street*” appears to have had a number of rental houses.¹⁰

The Cumings Family On 21 March 1918, the property was transferred into the name of John Nathaniel Cummings (sic), described as a farmer of Makino. However, the 1918 *Wise’s Directory* (p. 398) - and subsequent volumes - describe him as a carpenter. The spelling of the surname of this owner varies somewhat in the records sighted in relation to this study, including Cumings, Cummings, and Cummins. His marriage registration was recorded as ‘Cummings’; however, both he and his wife’s death registrations were as ‘Cumings’- which is the correct spelling.¹¹

The military record of Trooper ‘John Nathaniel Cummins’ states that he served in the South African War.¹² His military career is described in more detail an online document entitled: *SA84 Shoeing Smith (Jack) John Nathaniel Cumings – 1st Contingent, NZ Mounted Rifles*.¹³ This states that he was born in Maryborough, Queensland, in 1868 or 1869, the only son of an English couple, Benjamin and Abigail Cumings. The family moved to New Zealand in about 1890-91 and settled at Tawa. He enlisted for service in the South African War on 21st October 1899, and served in a number of campaigns there before returning to New Zealand in late 1900.¹⁴ He was duly awarded the ‘Queen’s South African Medal’ with six campaign clasps. Discharged from the Army in mid-1901, he then returned to work on his father’s farm at Tawa.

John Cumings married Ethel Jane Reid at Feilding in 1910, although they initially lived in Hamilton. The *Manawatu Times* of 9 November 1910 (p. 11) reported that: *A wedding was solemnised at Stanway, on November 2nd, when Miss Ethel Jane Reid, eldest daughter, of Mr R. M. Reid, was married to Mr John Nathaniel Cummings, only son of Mr and Mrs B. Cummings, formerly of Tawa Flat. The ceremony was performed by the Rev. James Jones at St. Michael’s Church, Stanway. The bride, who was given away by her father, wore a gown of heliotrope corded silk (especially sent from China as a present to the bride) and the usual veil and orange blossoms. The bridesmaids were Misses Mabel and Molly Reid, sisters of the bride, and Miss Mary Hillas, niece of the bridegroom. They wore cream silk voile and carried, beautiful shower bouquets, presented by Mr and Mrs Pilcher, of Makino. The best man was Mr D. Greer, and the groomsmen Mr M. C. Reid and Charles Reid, brothers of the bride. The many guests were entertained by Mr and Mrs Reid at their residence, Daisybank. The bridegroom’s present to the bride was a handsome gold watch, and he also presented bangles to the bridesmaids. In the*

⁸ *Evening Post*, 7 August 1909, p. 3

⁹ *Taranaki Herald*, 30 April 1912, p. 4

¹⁰ For example, *Feilding Star*, 21 April 1903, p. 3 (7); 20 October 1904, p. 3 (8); 25 August 1910, p. 3 (7); 24 May 1913, p. 3 (8)

¹¹ Births, Deaths & Marriages online: <https://www.bdmonline.dia.govt.nz/> : Ref: 1951/18686, 1968/45498

¹² Auckland Museum, online cenotaph: <http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C34823> ; See also *Horowhenua Chronicle*, 9 February 1922, p. 3 ‘Death of Christian De Wet.

¹³ ‘SA84 Shoeing Smith (Jack) John Nathaniel Cumings – 1st Contingent, NZ Mounted Rifles’

<https://poriruawarstories.com/cumings-john-nathaniel> The title ‘shoeing smith’ suggests that he was a farrier. Other references to him and as a trooper and as a private.

¹⁴ He is presumably the ‘Trooper Cumings’ who was newly returned home by late November 1900 (ref: *Evening Post*, 22 November 1900, p. 5)

*afternoon Mr and Mrs Cummings left for Palmerston North, en route for Hamilton, where they will live. The bride went away in a cloth tailor-made and hat to match.*¹⁵

The couple were back in the area by August 1911, when their son Maurice Charles was born at “Nurse Robinson’s, Makino”. They were living at Stanway by January 1913, when their daughter Abigail Eugenie May was born, also at Nurse Robinson’s at Makino.¹⁶ Subsequent known children included Grace Maude, born in 1914, and Ngaire Ethel, born in 1917.¹⁷

John Nathaniel Cumings died on 8 March 1951 aged 83 years, and Ethel Jane Cumings died on 15 July 1968 aged 83 years.¹⁸ However they had long since sold the house and returned to the Wellington area by that point. The couple are buried at Taita Cemetery.¹⁹

In 1941 the property had been transferred to Annie Eliza Wooldridge, wife of Ernest Wooldridge, a railway servant of Maewa. The Wooldridges had evidently lived in the area since at least 1914, as Ernest Wooldridge was recorded as a (NZ Railways) tablet porter at Maewa in May 1914, at which time he had won ten shillings in a national competition.²⁰

The property was then subdivided into a number of Lots in 1957, with the resulting Certificate of Title, WN750/88 (the house site), being issued on 22 July 1957, to Annie Eliza Wooldridge - her section now having been reduced to 1914 square metres in size. Ernest Wooldridge was still being described as a railway servant of Maewa at that time. Ernest Wooldridge died on 5 June 1959, aged 82 years, and Annie Wooldridge died on 3 January 1969, aged 93 years. They are buried at Feilding Cemetery.²¹

Subsequent Owners

Meanwhile, however, the property had been transferred in 1967 to Alexander John William Duff, retired, and his wife Maata Kui Duff. Alexander Duff had been a dairy farmer at Morrinsville, when he enlisted in the Army in 1941. He served in the Infantry Brigade during WWII.²²

The house was next transferred in 1972 to Alistair Huston Robert Campbell (a Feilding panelbeater) and his wife, Ngaere Anne Campbell. A new Certificate of Title, WN15A/116, was then issued on 8 September 1975, to Alistair Huston Robert Campbell and Ngaere Anne Campbell. The section had now been reduced to 1766 square metres, after a piece of the property was taken to become part of the street.

On 21 May 1980, the property was transferred to Wayne Manure Haimone (a Feilding freezing worker) and his wife Jocelyn Evelyn Haimone. It was again transferred – also on 21 May 1980 - to David Bruce McLeod (a Feilding electrical engineer) and his wife Susan Gaye McLeod. Work undertaken on the house in 1988 during the McLeods’ time included adding an upper storey that consisted of a bedroom, an en suite and a walk-in wardrobe, along with an additional extension downstairs.²³

In 1993, the property was next transferred to present owners, Kevin Edward De Joux and Ruwena Victorio De Joux, both of Feilding.

¹⁵ *Feilding Star*, 8 November 1910, p. 2; *Manawatu Times*, 9 November 1910, p. 11

¹⁶ *Feilding Star*, 25 August 1911, p. 2; 27 January 1913, p. 2

¹⁷ Births, Deaths & Marriages online: <https://www.bdmonline.dia.govt.nz/> : Ref: 1911/19877, 1913/13204, 1914/24230, 1917/3477

¹⁸ Births, Deaths & Marriages online: <https://www.bdmonline.dia.govt.nz/> : Ref: 1951/18686, 1968/45498

¹⁹ Cemetery Register, Hutt City: <http://portal.huttcity.govt.nz/?Tab=27> (Search: ‘Cumings’, Taita Cemetery – Old Section)

²⁰ *Wanganui Chronicle*, 4 May 1914, p. 2

²¹ Wooldridge grave, Feilding Cemetery: Billiongraves.com: <https://billiongraves.com/grave/Annie-Wooldridge/22503290?referrer=myheritage>

²² Auckland Museum, online cenotaph: <http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/167455>

²³ Manawatu District Council: Building Permit records

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Planning, construction and style

The house was originally a single storeyed Victorian Georgian Saltbox cottage with bay, however extensions at the rear in 1988 added a two storey section and a lower saltbox form to the north. Prior to these extensions, the plan was compact with a central front door, rooms either side of a central corridor and service rooms at the rear. Floor plans of the extensions were not sighted and the interior was not inspected.

The current house is unusual for the Georgian Saltbox style in having a projecting bay, which was, presumably, built at the time of construction. The bay was common in late Victorian and Edwardian Bay Villas. Saltbox cottages were common in the 1850s to the 1880s, while the Bay Villa were more common in the 1890s and early 20th century.

The main elevation faces east towards Lethbridge Street and comprises a gable with running wave pattern bargeboards and finial with a projecting bay. The bay has Italianate style shallow arch headed windows and panelled base. The remainder of the elevation is set back from the bay and comprises the glazed and panelled entry door and a single double hung sash window in the centre of the elevation. A verandah extends from the bay and wraps around the east and west elevations.

The 1988 additions have matching finials but casement windows and plain bargeboards.

The house is constructed with a timber frame, timber rusticated weatherboard cladding and timber joinery. Roofing is corrugated steel.

Style background

The Victorian Georgian Saltbox cottage is usually one to one and a half storeys, has a symmetrical main elevation, central front door and a shallow to medium uneven, pitched gabled roof. Other details include shallow or no eaves, double hung sash windows, shiplap weatherboards in early examples, rusticated weatherboards in later examples and they usually face the street. They often had a verandah and a rear lean-to.

Setting

The house is sited in a flat, open, suburban residential setting with houses mostly built in the mid 20th century. It is set well back from the street and has extensive lawns and mature trees around the property. A large, old, timber barn is located behind the house. A fence constructed with substantial brick posts and metal railings separates the house from the footpath and street. On the opposite side of the street is the railway line with a crossing just to the north of the house.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE VALUES

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

The house has **moderate architectural** values in being designed in an unusual combination of the Victorian Georgian Saltbox style and Victorian Bay Villa styles, the two styles spanning early settlement days to the early 20th century.

The house has **moderate rarity** values in its unusual combination of styles.

The house has **low to moderate authenticity** with extensive alterations to the rear of the building, more than doubling the size of the house.

The house has **moderate associative** values with the Hubner family, who emigrated from Prussia to the Manawatu in the 1880s, with George Hubner likely to have built the house.

Given the range and levels of heritage values, the house has **moderate education** values as it can contribute to an understanding of settlement, emigration, and architectural history of the Manawatu.

SOURCES

Online Sources

Auckland Museum, online cenotaph: <http://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/> [as per footnotes]

Billiongraves.com: <https://billiongraves.com/> [as per footnotes]

Births, Deaths & Marriages online: <https://www.bdmonline.dia.govt.nz/> [as per footnotes]

Geni.com: <https://www.geni.com/people/August-Hubner/6000000015203912651> : Hubner family tree

Google Street View <https://www.google.co.nz/maps/> [as per references in text]

Hutt City Council: Cemetery Register: <http://iportal.huttcity.govt.nz/?Tab=27>

Manawatu District Council: Maps: http://www.mdc.govt.nz/online_services/find_it/district_maps

NZHistory.co.nz: <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/suffragist/alice-m-hubner> : Alice M. Hubner – signed the Women’s Suffrage petition.

Papers Past: <https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers>: *Evening Post, Feilding Star, Hawera & Normanby Star Horowhenua Chronicle, Manawatu Times, Taranaki Herald, Wanganui Chronicle, Wanganui Herald* [as per footnotes and text]

Porirua War Stories: ‘SA84 Shoeing Smith (Jack) John Nathaniel Cumings – 1st Contingent, NZ Mounted Rifles’ <https://poriruawarstories.com/cumings-john-nathaniel>

OTHER SOURCES

Manawatu District Council: Certificates of Title; Property File for 160 Lethbridge Street and its Building Permit records

Whyte, Philip, ‘160 Lethbridge Street’, in *“Proposed Register of objects and places of historic interest of natural beauty”* (Feilding Borough Council, 1980) A copy of this is held in MDC’s Property File on the house.

IMAGES

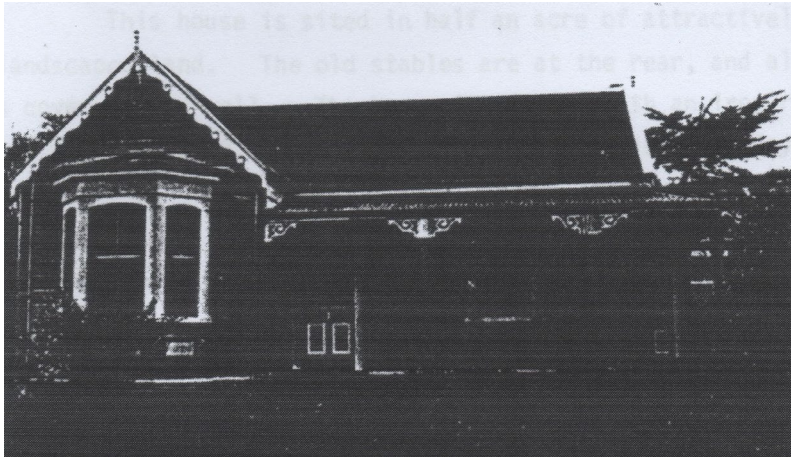


Figure 1 A photocopy of a photo of the front of the house that appears in Philip Whyte's report: '160 Lethbridge Street', in *"Proposed Register of objects and places of historic interest of natural beauty"* (Feilding Borough Council, 1980)



Figure 2 A Google Street View image of the front of the house from February 2010, showing the upper floor that was added in 1988 above the original gable end.



Figure 3 A photocopy of a photo of the side of the house that appears in Philip Whyte's report: '160 Lethbridge Street', in *"Proposed Register of objects and places of historic interest of natural beauty"* (Feilding Borough Council, 1980)



Figure 4 A Google Street View image of the house from May 2015, showing the new upper storey of the house, along with another addition to the side of the house, which was added in 1988.

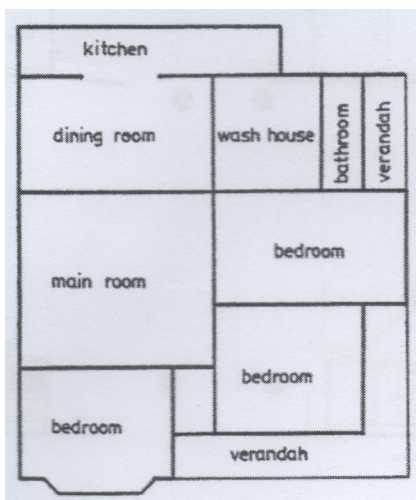


Figure 5 A floor plan of the house that appears in Philip Whyte's 1980 report

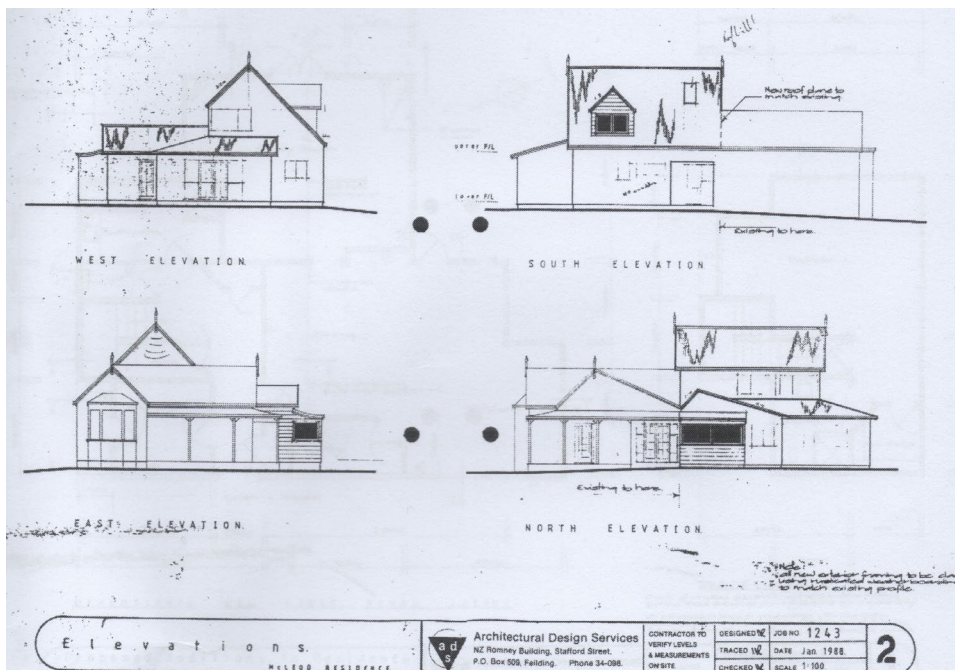


Figure 6 Plans of the 1988 additions to the house from Manawatu District Council's Building Permit records for this property



Figure 7 160 Lethbridge Street from the Manawatu District Council's website



Figure 8 Trooper John Nathaniel Cumings, photographed soon after the South African War, wearing his 'Queen's South Africa Medal' that was presented to him in Auckland in June 1901 by the Duke of Cornwall – later King George V. He and his family lived in this house between 1918 and 1941.¹