

Mountfort House – 52 East Street, Feilding



Architect: Not known

Construction date: 1878-86

Visible materials: Timber cladding & joinery, corrugated steel roofing

Architectural style: Victorian double gable villa

Use/building type: Residential

Date and Compiler: Ian Bowman, 2014

Heritage New Zealand listing: Category 2

Proposed category: B

PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY¹

Outline history

The house was constructed between 1878 and 1886 for Alfred John Mountfort. After several years in Feilding, he was appointed as District Surveyor in Auckland when he sold it to his brother Charles Adman Mountfort. Both brothers and their father, Charles Wheeler Mountfort, played a major part in surveying the area for the Manchester Block settlement.

The house was constructed in three periods. Circa 1878-1886, the original double gable villa was constructed while in 1888-1894 the central portion of the house was constructed which repositioned the front door. In 1902 a formal dining room and kitchen were added. Few houses in the Manawatu survive from this very early period of settlement.

An early wash house and another early outbuilding still survive on the property.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

¹ Heritage NZ online list

The single storeyed house is designed in an amalgam of styles, which today would be described as Victorian double gabled villa. The earliest portion of the house has medium pitched double gables with finials and strap work decoration in each. Eaves are supported by pairs of ornate brackets, possibly added with the 1888-1894 addition was made. The panelled and glazed main entry faces north under the junction of the gables. A shallow concave verandah wraps around east, north and west which has a lintel with a repeated open circular fretwork pattern and simple 45 degree braced brackets to each post. Windows are three paned casements with a triple window to the east of the front door and a double window on the west. The east elevation also has double casements.

It is possible that the first structures of the house were a double gables Georgian Box cottage, which, was a vernacular carpenter response to limited budget accommodation, using readily available materials, using styles from England. Cottages could be increased in size by adding a lean-to, 'saltbox', or double gables located parallel to each other. Key characteristics of the style include symmetry, medium pitched roofs, close eaves, boxed eaves, a verandah and small paned or large sash windows.

The second addition was at right angles to the original building with a gable, the same height as the originals, extending from the east verandah to the west verandah, maintaining the formal symmetry of the original. Finials, strap work in the gable and eaves brackets match the north wing and windows are double hung sash with hoods over each. A side door leads from the verandah into the house.

The last extension has a lower roof than the first two extensions and is hipped but with a small, slightly off centre gable on the east and west elevations. Each gable has a finial but no other decoration. Windows are double hung with a combination of single and double paned sashes. There are two further, smaller, hipped roofed extensions towards the rear.

The main and verandah roofing is corrugated steel, and all exterior walls are lined with timber rusticated weatherboards.

The house is set at an angle to the road with extensive lawns and several large trees. The road boundary has a timber post and rail fence.

In 2015-2016, a building consent was issued for the following alterations:

- Alterations to dwelling, existing storeroom change to Laundry, Laundry to Scullery, Lounge to Kitchen/Dining Room, Study 1 to Living, Kitchen to Study, Bathroom to entrance, Dining Room to Master Bedroom, Master Bedroom to Lounge, Study 2 to Bathroom & Wardrobe. New Porch.

In 2021, the site has been subject to a subdivision consent to subdivide part of the section that fronts the East Street and Derby Street intersection.

No plans of the building have been sighted and the interior was not able to be inspected.

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 **moderate to high regional** significance for **physical, historic, and cultural** heritage values.

The house has **high architectural, representative** and **rarity** values as one of very few buildings surviving from the earliest stage of European settlement, built in a common but now rare style for the period. Each of the two subsequent extensions was also designed in a style typical of the times.

The exterior of the house appears to have **high** levels of **authenticity** from each period of construction.

The house has **moderate group** values, as it is likely to be one of the largest of the surviving Manchester Block settler houses in Feilding. Its larger scale is suggestive of the professional success of the Mountfort family.

The house has **high associative** values in its association with the Mountfort family, three members of whom were principal surveyors of the Manchester Block enabling settlement of farmland and towns such as Feilding. The Mountfort family association with the house continued for over a century.

The house has **moderate pattern** values as a house constructed by an early professional who settled and worked in the Manawatu.

Given the age and style of the house, it has **moderate educational** values in the architectural and settlement history of the Manawatu.

The house is listed category 2 with Heritage New Zealand.

SOURCES

HNZ on-line list