

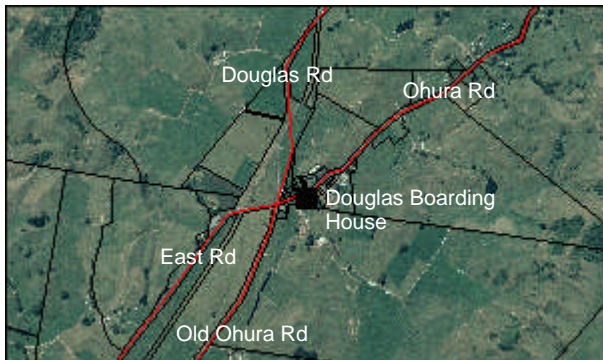


Douglas Boarding House

Forgotten World Highway, Douglas

1906

Use:	Residential	Historic Value:	3 out of 5
Materials:	Timber	Architectural Value:	2 out of 4
NZHPT Registered:	Historic Places Category II	Technical Value:	1 out of 2
Legal Description:	Lot 2 DP 2219 Lot 1 DP2359 Lot1 DP6590 Douglas Tnsp Blk XIII Ngatimaru SD	Symbolic Value:	- out of 3
		Rarity Value:	1 out of 2
		Townscape Value:	1 out of 2
		Group Value:	- out of 2
		Overall Heritage Value:	8 out of 20



The Douglas Boarding House was built in 1906 by a local farmer by the name of Mr. Arthur Walter. It became a half-way house and later on a stopping place for the frequent travellers passing through the area. Often they would travel by horseback to Douglas and stay at the Boarding House before going on further by train. In those days a stable was also available at the Boarding House for people to leave their horse and gig while they were away.

In 1917, the Needham family took over, and the meals alone (cooked by Mrs. Needham), gained the Boarding House a wide and well respected reputation. Indeed, the house became something of a community meeting point as locals would congregate around the piano or participate in card games held in the commercial room. The popularity of these were no doubt heightened by the fact it was the only room in the House in which Alf Needham would permit alcohol.

Later a Billiard Hall was built next door, housing two tables for the entertainment of the guests. This however no longer remains.

In 1918 this all changed, as the house was used as a makeshift hospital during the Influenza Epidemic. Patients were tended to in the dining room and Mrs. Needham and her daughter managed to keep the entire Boarding House running throughout the epidemic and miraculously all patients survived.

By 1928, the Boarding House ceased to be licensed as a restaurant. The next big change for the building came in 1941 when it was purchased by the Douglas Dairy Company, who converted it into three flats to be used by their married staff. More staff lived in huts to the rear of the property between the factory (next door) and the river. The reason for this was that by housing staff close by, increased production rates could be achieved to help provide a much needed income during the Second World War.

In 1958 though, the Dairy Factory closed down, a consequence of which meant the accommodation was no longer needed. As a result, the Douglas Brick and Field Tiles Company bought the Boarding House for their staff accommodation.

By the 1960's however, the advancement of transport was felt by the Boarding House as workers began to commute from Stratford. The building became vacant and derelict and this brought the end of its function as an accommodation provider. Since then it has been used by toy-makers, silver-smiths and herbal pharmacists.

The Boarding House is now a private residence, but its origin and colourful history is still alluded to with the current owner leaving the 'Douglas Boarding House' sign exposed (*see insert photo*).



Bibliography:

Walter, Bradley, David & Marie: 'Douglas: A Taranaki Rural Community' [1981]
Church, Ian: 'The Stratford Inheritance' [Heritage Press, 1990]
Photo; bottom left prior page: Private collection of M.C. Pryce