



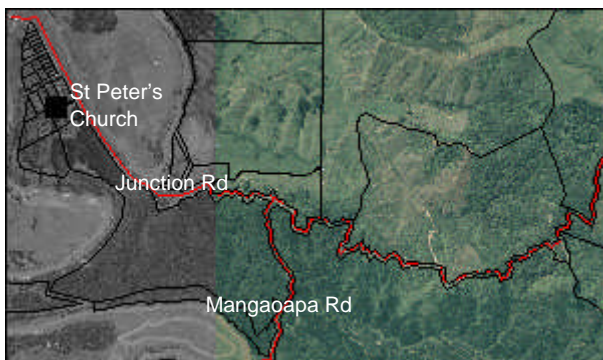
St Peter's Church

Tu Ki Te Arero

Purangi

1906

Use:	None, former church	Historic Value:	4 out of 5
Materials:	Rusticated weatherboard façade, iron roof	Architectural Value:	2 out of 4
NZHPT Registered:	Not registered	Technical Value:	- out of 2
Legal Description:	DP 1550 Purangi Sub Blk 11 Ngatimaru SD	Symbolic Value:	2 out of 3
		Rarity Value:	1 out of 2
		Townscape Value:	1 out of 2
		Group Value:	- out of 2
		Overall Heritage Value:	10 out of 20



Purangi and the surrounding area was once heavily populated by the Ngati Maru people. In the mid 19th Century, they were forced to defend it against the Titahi people and other attacking tribes and they succeeded in doing so for years. Eventually though, the Ngapuhi came armed with guns against the Ngati Maru's traditional weaponry, and this resulted in the majority of the Ngati Maru people fleeing south to the lower North island. After this, only a few remained in the area.

In the early 1850's, Reverend Henry Govett, who was based in New Plymouth, ventured up the Waitara River with some recently converted Maori people to assist him, calling at villages along the way. There was no trouble on the trip, however he was not met with much enthusiasm until he arrived at Pukemahoe. The chief of the Ngati Maru people had already heard favourable reports of Govett, after a recent trip to the 'Outside World'. As a result, Reverend Govett became the first white man to enter into this tribe. He could speak Maori and was well-received by the people. It was consequently decided that a Church would be built as a place of worship, in the hope that it would ensure Govett would keep visiting. The mix of European and Maori architecture was quite obvious, with Govett's influence noticeable in the walls being made of horizontal Totara planks, shaped windows and a shingle roof. The traditional bare-earth floor and centre pole being used, were reminiscent of Maori practices of the time. The Church became known as 'Tu-ki-te-Arero' meaning 'This building was erected for the teaching and learning of the Word of God' or 'You are out of order to converse on any other subject'.

Even after Govett became Archdeacon in 1859, he continued to be a frequent visitor to the Ngati Maru people.

However, in the 1860s war broke out between the Maori and Pakeha and the Mission House fell into disuse. Later, during the 2nd Taranaki War, the Pai-Marire cult came to the area and the remaining Ngati Maru people accepted the new beliefs, thus turning their back on God. The Niu pole was erected and the people participated in the frenzied worship around it.¹ Eventually though, all the Ngati Maru people drifted off and sadly the little Church at Pukemahoe burnt down in a bush fire c.1895. The only thing that was saved was the bell which had apparently come from an old wreck.

1903 bought renewed interest in returning Maori to the teaching of the Gospel, as the Rev F.A. Bennett (who went on to become the first Maori Bishop) was sent into Taranaki. He visited with the remaining Ngati Maru people who were now located at Purangi (Pukemahoe was abandoned), and it was decided that a replacement Church would be built.

The land on which St Peter's Church is built was given by two European men, C.H. Harding and C.H. Roberts, and this began an interesting fusion of the ethnic groups, Maori and European. The two main builders were brothers; Tutanuku Tume and Te Manihera Tume, providing a link to the old Church at Pukemahoe. They were the nephews of Te Manihera - the original lay preacher who had been tutored by Rev Govett and had become a Christian martyr after being killed at Taupo whilst attempting to spread the word of Christianity. A third carpenter was Tohe Pakanga, who was Te Manihera's grandson. The symbols and carvings were created by Te

¹The act of worship centred, for the Pai Marire cult, on the Niu pole. It was 15–80 ft high, straight, and crossed by yardarms with two curved knobs representing the gods Ruru and Riki. Rope streamers descended from the pole on the top of which was a flag. After assembling in military order, the followers marched clockwise round the pole to the accompaniment of chants of mixed origins. The increase in pace of marching, giddiness and emotional fervour caused people to stumble and impede the flow round the pole. This marked the end of a service of which there might be several each day.

Kaporere Patuwairua of Wanganui and it has also been said that Kupuranu Whetuwera did some of the Church carving. The only paid work involved was that of Mr W.F. Dowman who shingled the roof. Young Billy Bertrand, Te Manihera's great-great-grand nephew and Tutanuku Tume's adopted son acted as the "go-for", doing odd jobs when he wasn't at school.

The basic design of the Church is European but the front porche is reminiscent of a Maori Whareniui. Originally the Church had Maori carvings down the front faces, depicting Te Manihera on the right and Titokowaru on the left. These amo panels were buried along the left hand side of the Church in 1987 when they became dilapidated. The paintings under the eaves are of the original design, only being repainted over the years. Interestingly, these show Ratana² symbols through the central band of painting.

The Church was dedicated to Archdeacon of Taranaki, Ven R.H. Cole DCL, and officially opened on St Peter's Day, 29 June 1906. Many important Maori people were present, including the Ngatihau (with chief Poutini), the Ngatikura (with chief Tuatini), the Ngatitai (with chief Rangihuatau), the Ngatiruru (with chiefs Tewen and Tuna), Ngatingarau (with chief Kauika) and the Ngauruaka (with chiefs Whatitere and Tuna). They were all led from the pa by the highest ranking chief of the tribes whom was represented, Kere Ngataierua. He was followed by various religious representatives, and the Maori people fell in behind them. With Kere in front carrying a large rough-hewn wooden cross the procession made its way along to the Church singing a Maori hymn as they went. Once they arrived at the Church, a short 'Dedication Office' was given, then those present took Holy Communion in Maori and the Archdeacon preached the sermon in Maori. Due to the large numbers of people present, the seating had been removed so that the congregation could crowd together on the floor. Later on in the morning, a service was held for the Europeans present, many of whom were neighbouring settlers. The Archdeacon repeated his sermon in English.

After the formalities, the Maori people of Purangi put on huge feast for all of their guests. In the afternoon the Maori people had a korero and the evening was spent by guests being treated to a display of poi dancing and other traditional Maori entertainment.

Minor maintenance and alterations have continued to take place since. The shingle roof was replaced with iron in 1912 and in 1928 the vestry was added and concrete paths were laid. In the same year, the Ladies Guild (of Purangi) was formed and they donated books and kneelers to the Church. In 1929 they raised enough money to purchase white linen for an altar cloth and white sateen for a large curtain behind the altar. A psalm book and surplice was also provided. In 1930 this very same group organised a working day to take place on the 28th of October, to paint the Church.

The 1950's brought much work around the Church. Early that decade, it was repainted, then in 1957 floorboards in the vestry were replaced, using donated timber from Mr. M. Rawlinson and further donations of altar frontal and drapes were given by the Matau Guild. 1958 brought new altar rail kneelers and cushions and the vestry floor was varnished. In 1959 the new fence surrounding the Church was completed.

The Purangi Cemetery is on Purangi Terrace, separated from the Mangahau Pa. This is across the river from St Peter's. Ex-school pupils remember being able to see from their window the funeral procession and casket being carried by horse and cart along the road and then being

² Rātana was an indigenous Maori religion, founded by a 20th century faith healer, and drew upon elements of Christianity.

put upon a canoe-like vessel to float it across the river to the cemetery. There was a Church graveyard too though, and a number of Maori people were buried around the front of the Church. Unfortunately the headstones would have been made of wood or a sort-stone, so they no longer remain. Also, as it was not an official cemetery its unlikely that any records will ever be found. It is believed that Tutanuku Tume was buried there though, in 1917. Two concrete plots do exist, but these do not have headstones on them. It is possible that the last burial there was sometime in the 1940s.

In the 1980s, a lot more maintenance was done on the Church. A white wooden fence was erected from two corners of the Church in 1982 and in 1986 a new green coloursteel roof was put on. The hardships of time had been felt on a lot of the wooden parts of the building too, so the verandah was rebuilt, with a large amount of the timber being replaced.

In 1991, the Maori Trade Trainees from the Taranaki Polytechnic Painting and Decorating course repainted St Peter's again. This was done in preparation for the centennial celebrations held in April, during which the lovely little Church shone as it had when it was first opened some 85 years ago.

Interestingly St Peter's Church has never been lined. It now houses the two Rolls of Honour for Purangi after they were moved from the school and hall when they closed.

Today, this Church is still steeped in history. To the left of the front porch hangs the bell that once hung at the old Church at Pukemahoe. It is not the only reminder of the Church's difficult history though. The alter cross was presented and dedicated by F.A. Bennett, Bishop of Aotearoa in 1932. It was fashioned out of the original centrepole of the old Pukemahoe Church and the inscription on its base reads:

Made from the centrepole of a Maori Church which was erected at Pukemahoe, Taranaki, about the years 1853-1855. Owing to the outbreak of war between the two races in 1860 it fell into disuse, gradually became a ruin and was eventually accidentally burnt. The centre pole was the only part that remained and for forty years still pointed heavenwards. This part of the pole that escaped the fire was cut down in 1903 and this cross was made from it.

The Church linens and hangings are kept in the small casket that was made by local man Mr. Frank Webb and given to the Church in the 1920s. On special occasions and during rare services now held at the St Peter's, these are brought out of storage and displayed proudly at the front of the Church. Until the next time, St Peter's remains silently upon the hill at the old settlement of Purangi.

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Ian & Laurel Aitken's oral information and tour of St Peter's