

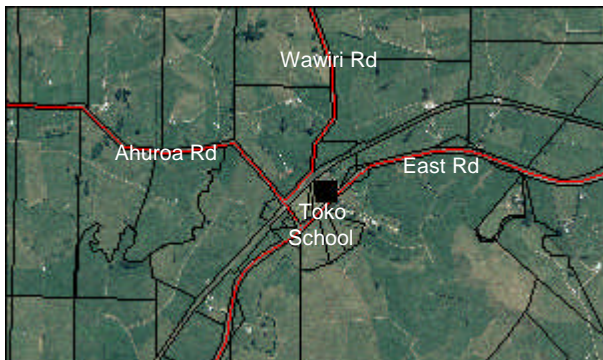


Toko School

East Rd

1893

Use:	School	Historic Value:	2 out of 5
Materials:	Timber, iron roof	Architectural Value:	1 out of 4
NZHPT Registered:	Not Registered	Technical Value:	- out of 2
Legal Description:	Pt Lot 1 DP 2492 & Pt Sec 7 Blk IV Ngaere SD	Symbolic Value:	- out of 3
		Rarity Value:	- out of 2
		Townscape Value:	1 out of 2
		Group Value:	- out of 2
		Overall Heritage Value:	4 out of 20



The Toko block of land was negotiated for purchase from the Ngati Ruanui by Charles Brown in the early 1880's. However, the government at the time (under Sir Harry Atkinson) had stopped buying land, and so the block was instead sold to Thomas Bayly in 1894. Bayly had the land surveyed in 1889, and settlers started to come to the area.

In 1892, the community of Toko experienced a large period of growth. W. Kennedy's Sawmill was established, hotel and telephone offices were opened, and regular coaches between Stratford and Toko were started. It was during this year that the Toko School was opened. The school had humble beginnings – the first classroom was a loft in George Parkhouse's cowshed, reached by an old ladder. The first teacher was Miss C.A. Kin.

In the following year, the first school building was erected on the current site, at a total cost of £263. The school was built on the planned village site to make it central to the settlements. However, businesses were started at the Huinga crossroads, and the village sprung up there instead. Various unsuccessful attempts have been made to relocate the school to Toko village – firstly in 1894, just a year after the school had been built, and then again in 1900 when it failed after the school committee voted 7:2 against the move.



In 1898 a teacher's residence was built. This was meant to have been built at the same time as the school, but a lack of funds meant it was not possible for a few years. A library was also proposed for, with books being bought (supplemented by donations).

The roll continued to grow as more and more families moved into the district, with a second classroom being built in 1902 in anticipation of this pattern continuing. Indeed, by 1906 the town had a population of 169, and the school had a peak roll of 171. This had numerous effects on the school's resources – including the school paddock becoming too small for the 50 or more horses that some of the pupils rode to school. The roll stayed large and consequently in 1921 a third classroom was added.

In 1937, the Toko School was completely destroyed by fire. It is not known what caused this, but it is thought that either a crack in the chimney that had been caused by an earthquake held some flammable material that finally combusted, or there was a fire bug in Toko. Everything inside the school was also destroyed, apart from the piano. Building of a new school was started straight away, with classes being held in the hall in the meantime. In 1938, a new three room "free-air" school building was opened.

World War II had a reasonably large influence on the school and how it operated. Pupils during this time sat exams for the St John's Ambulance Group, dug an air-raid shelter under some of the trees on the school grounds, and the school practiced evacuations, just in case there was a bomb scare. The war years were difficult, and the Silver and Gold Jubilees were not celebrated, as they occurred during this time.

Improvements and enlargements have been made over the years to the Toko School. In 1953 an assembly hall was opened after many working bees had been held (organised by Maurice Killsby). The Taranaki Education Board supplied the plans and the joinery for this project, which helped to keep the costs down. A library was added in 1980, when the Toko Post Office building was sold and shifted to the school. The roll continued to steadily increase, after a drop during the war years. This prompted the Board to enlarge the school, and so in 1985 new re-locatable classrooms arrived and a fourth permanent teacher was appointed.

A major building project was undertaken in 1992. This began when Huinga School joined Toko School, and the roll promptly increased. The school hall and a classroom were relocated on the site, and another re-locatable classroom and a community funded library were bought from Huinga School. The staffroom was extended, with a new principal's office and school office being built. Corridors were upgraded, including a covered walkway being built to link the library and new junior block to the main building. The grounds were also improved, with cobble-stoned areas and raised bark gardens being added.

Today, the Toko School is still in use, as a successful, full-primary rural school. An Education Review Office evaluation completed in 2005 shows the roll stands at 94, with a decile rating of 7. The school is described as having "*spacious and attractive grounds*", and "*well organised classrooms... (with an) extensive range of appropriate learning resources, including ICT and a well-used school library*". The school building has a wonderful history, with the large number of pupils that have been through the school all holding wonderful memories of their time at Toko.

Bibliography

Toko Centennial 1893-1993

Church, Ian; *The Stratford Inheritance*, The Heritage Press (1990) p51-52

Education Review Report, 24 June 2005 (www.ero.govt.nz)