



Whangamomona Hotel

Ohura Rd, Whangamomona

1902

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|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| Use: | Hotel | Historic Value: | 4 out of 5 |
| Materials: | Timber Framework and facade; corrugated iron sides and roof. | Architectural Value: | 3 out of 4 |
| NZHPT Registered: | Historic Place Category II | Technical Value: | 1 out of 2 |
| Legal Description: | Secs 5, 6, 15, 16 Blk II Whangamomona Tnsp | Symbolic Value: | 1 out of 3 |
| | | Rarity Value: | 1 out of 2 |
| | | Townscape Value: | 2 out of 2 |
| | | Group Value: | 1 out of 2 |
| | | Overall Heritage Value: | 13 out of 20 |



Whangamomona Township was established in 1895, and with a large amount of agricultural, road and railway work available, the town soon became quite prosperous. The population of about 200 was serviced by 30 businesses, including banks, store, stables, a library, billiard room, police station, refreshment rooms and the Whangamomona County Council Headquarters.

A Hotel was erected by builders Irwin and Henry in 1902, with timber from the saw mill on Marco Road that was owned by Mrs. Chas Grant. This Hotel was called Whangamomona Hotel, but was better known as 'Whanga Pub', and consisted of a bar, kitchen, and 14 rooms. The first license was transferred from Whenekura, south of Patea, with Mr. Fred Calgher becoming the first owner.



Unfortunately, the hotel burnt down in 1910, leaving only the kitchen coal range. A new corrugated iron building (*the present Hotel*) was built in 1911 as a replacement, and was constructed around the coal range – which is still standing, and working, in the present kitchen (*see insert picture*).

Whangamomona Hotel has always been the focal point for the district – in 1919 it served as a hospital while the district experienced a widespread influenza epidemic. The Hotel staff supplied the meals for the sick, while everyone with a little medical knowledge was engaged in looking after the patients. The Hotel even managed to survive

the Great Depression – with the Hotel being sold during this time with the incoming publican's wife as part payment.

From the 1960's, the population of Whangamomona started to shrink, with a major fire having destroyed many of the buildings on the main street, and the completion of the railways causing many men to lose their jobs. By the 1970s, the district had experienced a dramatic 70% population decline. The Hotel could no longer afford to provide accommodation services, and so in 1975 it reverted to a tavern – with the bar remaining the centre of entertainment for the district.

Whangamomona Hotel regained its full license again in around 1984 – an interesting story from the 1980s tells of pies being delivered to the Hotel every Monday from Stratford. If the Monday happened to be a public holiday, then no pies were delivered until the following Monday, with the publican's wife making sandwiches in the meantime. Additions made to the roof during this decade were deemed insensitive, and degrading to the character of the building. In 1989, the Hotel became the place where the citizens of the town met to declare Whangamomona a republic, after Wellington bureaucrats had placed half the community in the new Manawato - Wanganui region, and left the other half in the Taranaki region.

By 2001, due to a continual decrease in population, the Whangamomona Hotel had become a derelict building on the verge of closing. The locals attempted to form a syndicate to purchase it, but thankfully it was bought by Clare and John Grant, from New Plymouth, who became the 24th owners of the Hotel. Within three years they had upgraded the building, adding new bathrooms, spaces and furnishings. This resulted in the Hotel achieving finalist status for the

“Best Redeveloped Bar and Restaurant” in the 2005 HANZ awards for excellence. The Whangamomona Hotel, known as being the most remote pub in the country, has had many other successes under the management of the Grants, including winning the ‘Best Country Hotel’ award in 2005, after being a finalist the year before.

The Hotel currently has 11 double rooms, a dining room seating 50 people, and live music most Saturday nights, making it once again the social hub for the local district population. It also employs 13 staff, most of them local, and

has become the major factor in the development of new tourism ventures in Whangamomona – including trekking, quad bikes, and a café. Weekend accommodation is usually booked out three months in advance; with an 80% occupancy rate over summer. The Hotel has enhanced heritage features, and without it, Whangamomona would most likely completely cease to exist.



Whangamomona Hotel in the early days

Bibliography

NZHPT records

Tourism WA: Hotel and Pub Business Plan 2006

Whangamomona Hotel website: <http://www.whangamomonahotel.co.nz/hotel.html>

History of Whangamomona County (1940)