



Whangamomona School

Whangamomona Rd

1904

Use: Camping ground
Materials: Weatherboard façade
NZHPT Registered: Not registered
Legal Description: Secs 26&27 Whang Tship Blk1
 Mahoe SD - RFC Res-

Historic Value: 2 out of 5
Architectural Value: 2 out of 4
Technical Value: - out of 2
Symbolic Value: - out of 3
Rarity Value: - out of 2
Townscape Value: 1 out of 2
Group Value: - out of 2

Overall Heritage Value: 5 out of 20



From 1898 to 1904, Whangamomona children traveled to Whangamomona School on Marco Road. The first school to be established in the actual Whangamomona Township was started in the newly opened Town Hall in 1904, under the name of Lower Whangamomona School. (The school was actually held in the supper room during the winter months, and in the Hall itself during summer). Miss L. Ainsworth was the first teacher, and on the 19th of September the first roll was noted as being 14. The school children would play in the bush-clad hills opposite the hall during their lunchtimes.

In 1905, the township school changed its name to Whangamomona School, with the school on Marco Road changing its name to Marco School. With the approach of the railway, the school roll was predicted to rapidly, and considerably, increase. The local residents and the Education Board realised this, and so had been urging the Education Department to make a grant for a permanent building.

In 1910, the Education Department responded with a grant of £350, with a building 23ft by 21 ft being completed in August of that year. The roll increased beyond predictions, with a total of 63 pupils in June 1911, squashing into a room that was built to cater for a maximum of 40 pupils. Whangamomona, it must be noted, was still a sole-teacher school at this time, which must have been a very hard job! The Education Department therefore arranged with the Public Works Department for a moveable classroom to be erected. This was made out of galvanized iron, and became the junior room. Another teacher was employed, which led to a head teacher's residence being built in 1912.

By 1914, the Whangamomona School roll had reached its peak of 83 pupils, as it was in this year that the railway finally reached Whangamomona. Also during this year, the school building started to be used for community purposes – with church services being held on Sunday's. The school library was gradually built up, with Whangamomona becoming the first school in New Zealand to use print script.

Because of the increased roll, the detached room was removed in order to build a permanent one. This was completed in early 1920, with the new classroom costing £556, including porches. The detached room was later moved to Tahora School, and then put into use at Kohuratahi Valley School.

Unfortunately, on the 10th of July 1926, the school was completely destroyed by fire, along with all the school records. The Education Department suggested moving the Marco School building to the Whangamomona Township, or building a school half-way between the two. These suggestions were not agreed to, as they were seen as unpractical, so a grant of £1,053 was approved for the replacement of the school (which is the present building). In the meantime, the school was held in the Presbyterian Sunday School.

Swimming pools were opened at the school in 1962. A continual decrease in the roll numbers saw Whangamomona go back to sole charge in 1974. In fact, the roll was so small (around 6) by May 1979 that the school was closed temporarily – being told that if they could secure 30-40 pupils then the school could re-open. This was not able to be done, and so the school remained shut. After its closure, the site and buildings were given back to the community, who then developed the facilities into a camping ground with community amenities.

Bibliography

Whangamomona 75th Jubilee & History of Whangamomona County