

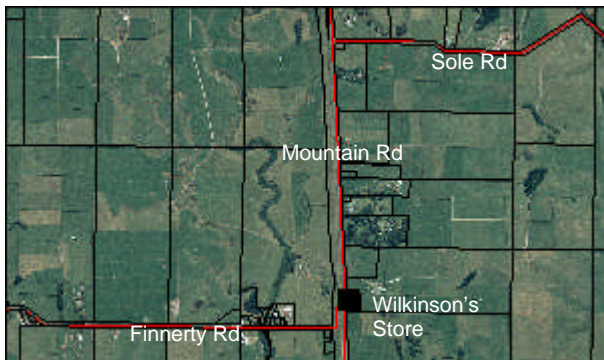


Wilkinson's Store

Mountain Rd, Ngaere

1894

Use:	Commercial – Antique Shop	Historic Value:	2 out of 5
Materials:	Iron, timber	Architectural Value:	- out of 4
NZHPT Registered:	Not registered	Technical Value:	- out of 2
Legal Description:	Lot 5 DP 150 Lot 6 DP 2004 Blk VI 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:	3 out of 20



The Ngaere district (or Ngaire as it was originally spelt) was settled in the late 1870's, with the railway reaching the community by 1880. This opened up the district to saw-millers, the majority of them travelling to Ngaere from the Marlborough Sounds. An Eltham businessman, Mr. C.A. Wilkinson, saw Ngaere's need for a store, and bought a site from Robson's on the 30th of June, 1894. Mr. Wilkinson built the store, and it was opened not long after.

A post office was moved from Frederick Crowther's Store on Finnerty Road to Wilkinson's Store in November 1896. In 1918, the post office was housed at the railway station, but ten years later it returned to the store and was run by the Arthur Family for 59 years until 1978.

In 1903, Mr. Wilkinson sold the store to Mr. Frank Arthur Lee. Mr. Lee had already established a small store in Ngaere in December 1900 (on the side of the boarding house), which was then taken over by Mr. Frederick Charles Davidson. By this stage, Ngaere had a butcher's, two stores, a hall, boarding house, blacksmiths, library, gardens, two churches and a school. This growth was due to the establishment of the Ngaere Co-operative Dairy Company in 1893, which offered employment to many settlers. Ngaere district was at its peak in 1906, with 151 men listed in the directory.

Frank Lee's Store was taken over by Jack and Harry Pennington, two brothers, in 1908. The store became a family business, with their sister Ethel becoming the store assistant. Jack Pennington became the sole proprietor in 1913, and bought the paddock next to the store from Jimmie Thomson for his delivery horses. Interestingly, Jimmie actually refused to sell Jack the piece of land, but was quite willing to sell it to Jack's wife, and so she became the legal owner. The Pennington Store was successful, and everyone in the district had an account there.

The Pennington's moved out, and for a few years they leased the building to James Arthur senior, who ran the store with his family. The Arthur's later took over ownership of the store completely. The Arthur's were successful business people, and while they owned it, the store was known as *"a real meeting-place and talking-place...with lots of laughter and joking."* In 1947, James Arthur died, aged 79, and his son Bill Arthur took over the store. Unfortunately, in 1951 Bill stubbed his toe and a blood clot formed, going to his heart. He died suddenly at the age of 44, and the store was left in the hands of his son, James (Jim) Hamilton Arthur.

Jim is remembered as a wonderful man with a heart of gold. In fact, Stan Bond made the comment *"I never heard him claim to be a Christian but he put a lot of Christians to shame."* Jim would trade potatoes and eggs with the customers, and gave credit to people even in winter, when there was nothing coming in. Jim bought a radio for the shop, which was one of the first in the district. He would tell customers the news, and often invited the children to listen to the children's session broadcasted on it. When people paid their accounts, he would give them a box of chocolates or a big bag of lollies.

The closure of the Ngaere Dairy Factory in 1977 resulted in a substantial decrease in the Ngaere population. The store was no longer running with a profit, and so Jim Arthur closed the store in March 1978, and took over Hedditch's Supermarket in Stratford with his son Peter. Alan Jago bought the store, and Wayne Gilmore used it for a while as a panel-beating business. In August 1980, Mr. and Mrs. Martin and Mr. D. Wilson opened an antique shop in the old store, and lately attached a wine shop. Fred Martin still owns and runs the popular little shop.