



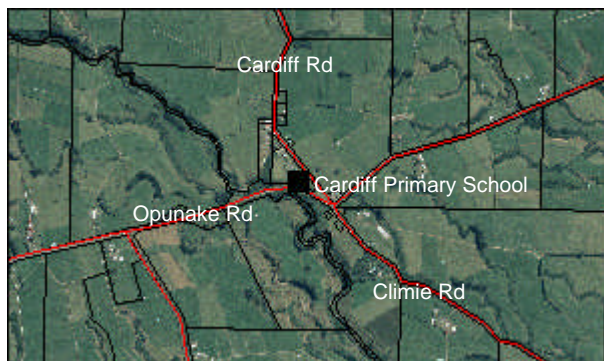
Cardiff Primary School

Cardiff Rd

1886

Use: Former school, no current use
Materials: Timber, iron roof
NZHPT Registered: Not registered
Legal Description: Pt Sec 67A Blk I Ngaere SD

Historic Value: 2 out of 5
Architectural Value: 1 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: 4 out of 20



James Simmons was one of the first pioneers to settle in the Cardiff area, after walking along a track (which is now Opunake Road) in February 1881. The Richards, Johnson, Ralfe and Marchant families settled later on, after clearing some bush in order to make ponga homes. The settler's children would walk 10 miles every day to attend Stratford School.

Cardiff lay in the Wanganui Education Board District, and when one of the board members came to assess the area for a school, Cardiff was reported to be unfavourable. However, the Johnson family decided to replace their ponga house, agreeing to provide a room for a local school, as long as the Education Board would provide a teacher. This was agreed to, with Mr. D.J. Williams being appointed, and classes commencing on 19 July 1886. The initial roll was 28, which soon increased to 31 with another family moving to the district.

1896 is seen as the birthing year for the Cardiff District. Not only did the school start, but a great fire during January had cleared away a lot of bush – more than the settlers had been able to do in the last five years. This meant Cardiff was able to become the most progressive locality in the county, and became the first to raise a loan to metal the roads.

Although the school at the Johnson's house was successful, the settlers were frustrated with not actually having a school building. The school committee

continued to petition to the Education Board, and even wrote a letter asking for money to clear the scrub on the identified school site and build a school. They got a reply – the Wanganui Board refused to make any money available to them until after the building had been constructed.

Eventually, the settlers had raised enough money for the school to be built. Mr. A.J. Walters, a Waingongoro Road settler, built the one roomed school, which officially opened on 18 May 1887. Mr. Williams continued on as the sole teacher.

Control of the school passed to the Taranaki Board in October 1891. By the next year, the Cardiff roll had risen to 39 with the opening of the Cardiff Cheese Factory to the district, and a request to the Board to extend the building was given approval.



The Cardiff Hall was built in 1922, with the school committee leasing $\frac{1}{4}$ of an acre of the school grounds as a place for the hall for 21 years, at £5 per year. Before this, the school building had acted as the social centre of the district, with many functions being held there. The 1920's proved to be a decade of improvements for the school – in 1921 tennis courts were added, a library was established in 1924, and in the next year electricity was installed.

The roll continued to increase, with the building becoming a slightly too cramped for the forty strong roll. For this reason, the building was sold for removal in February 1938 – giving the school committee a profit of £45. A new school building was completed and opened in the following month. It was discovered that this building had not been positioned perfectly, and so a few years later the position was changed for the school to be able to make the most of the sunlight. In 1949, a combined school pool and fire-fighting reservoir was built.

The school roll peaked in 1981 with 52 pupils, and a third teacher was employed in the following year. However, the school roll started to drop in 1983, and the third teacher was forced to leave. This roll decrease continued, with families moving to Stratford, or sending their children to other, larger schools. On the 1st of April 1999, Cardiff School was forced to close its doors for the last time, after providing 113 years of education to the Cardiff community.

Bibliography

Cardiff School and District Centennial 1886-1986

Articles: *Daily News*, 23 January 1986

Daily News, 8 May 1986

Church, Ian, *The Stratford Inheritance*, The Heritage Press (1990) p84-86