

European fruit.
“Tikitiki”: A Treaty signatory’s house

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Abstract

Wanganui’s architectural history is predominantly reflected in its buildings. Although the city is one of New Zealand’s oldest European settlements with much significant architecture, its architectural history is not recorded. There is much to rediscover about the links between significant historic events and the undocumented architecture of the area. This paper begins to document Wanganui’s architectural history by cross-reference to available historical documents, local Maori oral histories, and the architecture that remains. Through this process a new record is being created that identifies the significance of some important, almost forgotten architecture.

The house “Tikitiki” was built in 1867 for Hori Kerei and became the last residence of his father Kawana Paipai whose life spanned the period of early European settlement from 1799-1884. He was a Putikiwharanui ‘friendly native’, a loyal chief and one of a small group who were critical allies of European settlement in Wanganui. Paipai was present at several historic events including the Treaty of Waitangi signing and fought at important battles as a distinguished ‘irregular’ soldier. Paipai’s son Hori Kerei was also an irregular soldier and served for a period as aide-de-camp to Governor George Grey.

“Tikitiki” the house is examined as it was built, as it changed and as it exists today. Its architecture is documented and presented together with the historical and cultural context of its construction. The interweaving of Maori and European architectural history and the effects on the design and construction of Tikitiki are discussed. The historic and contemporary significance of the house to Wanganui and New Zealand architectural history is considered.

Much has been written and rewritten about Wanganui’s history during the early period of European settlement up to the 1870s. While much significant architecture remains, its historical significance and the context of its production is lost to all but the most observant and historically connected. New Zealand architectural histories also contain little of Wanganui’s significant architecture, with each new iteration reinforcing the canons and omissions of the past from a distance. This paper begins to reconstruct an architectural history of Wanganui from the period of European settlement. It documents key relatively unknown architecture and its historical context in some depth as a window through which to view architecture of the period and establish its significance. The paper traces key moments of the establishment of European settlement around the existing Maori settlement of Putikiwharanui and the exchange of architectural influences. It also collects and presents the history of key figures associated with the architecture.

When the first European traders and whalers visited Wanganui in the early 1830s, the Maori chief Paipai (also known as Tawhito) was already in his 30s and had lived through a period of time that had traversed regular intertribal warfare and the devastating effects of the musket wars. He would have fought as a warrior alongside his cousin Te Anau¹ and survived the period of Te Rauparaha’s aggression including the great raid and massacre at Putikiwharanui in 1829. This was the context of the initial visits and eventual settlement of Wanganui by Europeans. The first traders and

missionaries were welcomed as the bearers of goods, knowledge and Christianity and as valued allies to strengthen the local tribal position.

The missionary Henry Williams came to Wanganui in 1840 with a copy of the Treaty of Waitangi which was signed by nine chiefs on 23 May. The signatories included key Putiki rangatira - Te Anaua and his brother Te Mawae – as well as Tawhito². Four days later, Edward Jerningham Wakefield arrived to get signatures to the Deed of Sale of Whanganui to the New Zealand Company. One of the signatories to this deed was “Pai” short for Paipai. Paipai was the only Putiki man to consent to this later discredited sale, although Te Anaua signed “in foolishness” and both men were present when the Company handed out goods in return for land³. Paipai’s support for the European settlement of Wanganui was thus declared at the beginning of their relationship. He was never known to “waver or show any signs of the want of loyalty to the British flag”⁴.

Shortly after the New Zealand Company purchase in 1840, the first resident missionaries arrived in Wanganui and established a base at Putikiwharanui on the left bank of the Whanganui River. The other side of the river was designated for the European settlement that eventually grew into Wanganui city.

The Whanganui River basin is a tidal estuary through land which was a mixture of sand ridges, fern and swamps when the first European settlers arrived in 1841. “We began with Raupo Huts peeping out of the Lofty Fern” recalled missionary Richard Taylor in 1868⁵. Buildings constructed by Maori for the anticipated New Zealand Company settlers included 30 huts and a large “Te Whare Wikitoria” Baronial hall for Edward Jerningham Wakefield. These buildings were made from the raupo that was readily available from the nearby swamps, supplemented by vertical slabs of wood probably sourced from the abundant flood debris transported by the river. The early European settlers were primarily from middle class backgrounds and retained their aspirations for nice houses and servants⁶, but they needed shelter on arrival and were reluctant to put their resources into wooden houses in town while waiting to take up and develop their country sections.

The first European building of substance in Wanganui was a brick church at Putiki built by the first Anglican missionary John Mason. It was superseded by a new church built in 1844 by his successor, Richard Taylor, due to the brick church not only being too small, but because it was “so shattered by repeated earthquakes as to be quite dangerous”⁷. Richard Taylor also built the first substantial European house in Wanganui in 1843. It was the only European dwelling on the left bank of the river for some time. We know a lot about this 11-room two-storey house and its construction because of Taylor’s sketches and the existing plans and specifications drawn up by the builder, John Handley⁸. This house and many other early wooden buildings were constructed of the most readily available local timber – white pine or kahikatea. This was likely to have been sourced from the local Putiki woods that supplied timber for the building of the Rutland stockade or from up river at Kaiwhaiki⁹. White pine proved to be a poor choice of material as it is very susceptible to borer attack and rot. When Taylor returned from a trip to England in 1856 he noted that his mission house was in “imminent danger of collapse”¹⁰. The house remained standing for a further 14 years before it was eventually replaced having lasted only 27 years.

In 1843 the European population of Wanganui was 200¹¹. Paipai was one of the many Maori at Putiki who chose European names when they were baptized as Christians by the missionaries. Paipai’s choice of name “Kawana Pitiroi” (Governor FitzRoy) indicates he was probably baptized in 1843 in Taylor’s first year as missionary and around the time the new governor took up his post. In January 1846 Paipai first met a European Governor – George Grey – at a hui in Wanganui that involved all the local chiefs¹². Paipai’s son, born in 1826, was baptized Hori Kerei (George Grey)

Paipai either at the time Governor Grey visited Wanganui or soon after. In May 1846, Paipai assisted Donald McLean and his government surveyors in their work sorting out boundaries to complete the sale of Wanganui on behalf of the government. McLean noted in his diary that Te Kawana was skilled at surveying, managing “with his natural quickness and good eyesight to lay down the boundary line between the Whangaehu and Whanganui natives as straight a line as could be drawn”¹³.

In December 1846 Governor Grey dispatched the 58th regiment to Wanganui to assist in defending the settlement from raiding war parties, establishing the town as a garrison which it remained for nearly 25 years. Lieut TB Collinson of the Royal Engineers arrived to supervise the building of the Rutland stockade with the assistance of Putiki Maori who provided timber and were keen to support the soldiers in defending Wanganui¹⁴. Paipai was almost certainly involved in this work and met Collinson who drew a portrait of this “considerable chief of Putiki” complete with his facial moko. Paipai was not satisfied with the representation of his moko so he redrew it himself¹⁵.

In April 1847 the settlement of Wanganui was rocked by the massacre of six members of the Gilfillan family by a group of upriver Maori taking revenge after one of their relatives was shot in the face by a soldier. The young Putiki chief Hoani Wiremu Hipango and a party of Putiki Maori including Paipai captured the perpetrators and brought them back to Wanganui and European justice. Years later Richard Taylor wrote that “The governor [Grey] had granted Hipango a pension previous to the termination of his first governorship, on account of his noble conduct in apprehending the murderers of the Gilfillan; this, after his departure [in 1853] had never been paid. On discovering which, the Governor caused the arrears to be given to him, and with them Hipango built his house.”¹⁶ This house was probably built in the early 1860s after Hipango’s trip to England with Richard Taylor and after George Grey began his second term as Governor in 1861. However, we have yet to find other records of this house or its location. The house is significant for two reasons: (a) its building by a significant Maori historical figure who had traveled to England and been presented to Queen Victoria, and (b) because of the way it was funded, through a government grant rewarding loyal natives for their protection of the settlers.

When the issue of land purchase at Wanganui was settled with the sale negotiated in 1848 by Donald McLean the colonial government was keen to see an improvement in the conditions for Maori at Putiki. Donald McLean wrote to the Colonial Secretary in July 1849 about employing Robert Park, Surveyor to the New Zealand Company, to lay out a “Native Village” at Putiki¹⁷. McLean reported that the local Maori had “willingly acceded to the breaking down of large portions of their fortified pa to make way for wide healthy streets, instead of muddy cross paths. One respectable house, of similar dimensions as Te Rauparaha’s at Otaki, has been erected of native materials by George King (Te Anaua), the chief of Putiki, and four other houses of a similar description are in course of erection on the new town allotments.”¹⁸ The hybrid European influenced house with carved side verandah built for the Putiki chief Paetahi Metekingi and drawn by Richard Taylor in 1858 would have been one of these¹⁹. McLean also noted in 1849 “filthy old huts were being burnt down and replaced by neat verandah cottages”²⁰. The influence of European architecture and the displacement of traditional Maori architecture had begun in Wanganui.

During the 1850s the town of Wanganui grew speedily and settlers took up their country sections once security of tenure was assured. There were 700 Europeans in Wanganui by 1850, although 300 of these were soldiers. The 1860s were unsettled times with the rise of the Maori King movement and Hauhau rebellions threatening the town of Wanganui. Paipai and other “kupapa” (native “irregular” soldiers loyal to the Europeans) fought in battles on the Whanganui River, at Moutoa Island in 1864 and Ohoutahi in 1865 where Hipango was mortally wounded. Although aged 66,

Paipai led the Maori troops at Ohoutahi and took redoubts defended fiercely by the Hauhau rebels. Eighty men were taken prisoner after the battle²¹. Paipai spent the next four years serving with Te Keepa Rangihwinui (known as Major Kemp) in Taranaki and on the East Coast and was particularly renowned for his skill as a warrior²². In 1869 he went to Auckland with Major Kemp to be presented to the Duke of Edinburgh. Paipai was also a Maori statesman who participated in the major national hui of his time.

Paipai's son, Hori Kerei served as aide-de-camp to George Grey during his second term as governor²³. During this time in the mid-1860s, Kerei would have traveled widely with Grey and witnessed a number of major political negotiations with Maori. He would have been exposed to significant European influence, especially in Wellington and Auckland where he and his family would have participated in the European way of life enjoyed by the residents of these growing settlements. Kerei would have readily appreciated the relative advantages of the different architectural and living standards available at the time. His own public service had started in 1862 when he was appointed a native assessor²⁴, together with Metekingi, Hori Kingi and his Putiki contemporary, Major Kemp. Kerei later also served with his father Paipai under Kemp on the East Coast campaigns against Te Kooti from 1868-69 and was also awarded the New Zealand War Medal²⁵.

In 1864 Wanganui was seriously considered as a possible site for New Zealand's new capital²⁶ and by 1870, the population had reached 2,000²⁷. When Wanganui became a Borough in 1872 it was a flourishing town and an important distribution centre. It was during this period of growth that the house Tikitiki was built on the section known as Ngongohau No. 1 at Putikiwharanui.

1867 was a busy year for Hori Kerei. He was in Wanganui in January and July appearing before the Native Land Court to claim Ngongohau and other sections in the Putiki Native Reserve²⁸. Such claims were common following the 1865 Native Land Act that facilitated the development of a free market in Maori land. However, Kerei's claim for Ngongohau was adjourned twice for want of a better survey. On 30 November, George Grey set sail from Wellington for Kawau at the end of his governorship. At the same time "Mr & Mrs Hori Grey and Miss C Grey" were reported as incoming passengers to Wanganui on the *SS Wanganui*²⁹. Kerei's family would have arrived home to see their Putiki house in its final stages of construction. By March 1868 the house was "newly-erected" and being advertised as "a most desirable family residence" to let for one or seven years³⁰. Kerei's decision to join the Native Contingent under Major Kemp had no doubt resulted in some uncertainty over the family's domestic arrangements for the near future.

Hori Kerei was back in Wanganui in April 1869 to witness his seventeen-year old daughter, Harete (Charlotte) marrying an Irish soldier, William Forsythe³¹. The Forsythes left shortly after for Australia and Britain with William's regiment, the 18th Royal Irish, which was the last Imperial Regiment to leave New Zealand. Two years later, Hori Kerei's wife Ripeka Utanga died³².

On 12 December 1871, Hori Kerei and his father Kawana Paipai returned to the Maori Land Court to claim Ngongohau No. 1, to legalise their ownership of the land and house. Local surveyor Henry Claylands Field testified that the section included an enclosure "within which Hori Kerei's house stands and is fenced in"³³. The claim was granted and a certificate of title was ordered in favor of Kawana Paipai and issued on 11 March 1874³⁴.

Tradition has it that Tikitiki was one of three houses built at the same time – these houses are pictured in a photograph together with the new mission house at Putiki which was completed by December 1870³⁵. The second house "Matapihi" was built for Paetahi Metekingi who became

Member of Parliament in 1868 and the third for Hākaraia Korako³⁶, another Putiki rangatira and brother-in-law to Major Kemp. However, Tikitiki is the only one of the three houses to retain its architectural integrity; the other two remain on site but have been altered substantially with the removal of their upper floors and interior remodeling.

[Fig 1]

Tikitiki the house remains much as it was originally built - a two floor 'T' shaped plan with 2:1 proportion steep pitched roof and large dormer windows. The house design is influenced by the Gothic revival style that informed the designs of other early Wanganui houses built around the same time. Netherdale at Matarawa (1867 additions), the Field house at Aramoho (1868) and the Presbyterian Manse in town³⁷ (1868) all show a carpenter Gothic revival influence with steep gables and similar vertical proportioning. Tikitiki and its sister houses were very significant dwellings of a size and standard that would have been the envy of many of the European settlers of the time. The houses were commensurate with the mana of the rangitira they were built for. These chiefs had facilitated the early European settlement in Wanganui, served as loyal irregular soldiers and undertaken important local and national political leadership roles.

Paipai lived in this house until his death in 1884. In 1902 Charlotte and William Forsythe returned to Putiki to live with Hori Kerei at Tikitiki³⁸. The Forsythes had returned to New Zealand in 1878 and William then spent a number of years working in the prison service. Hori Kerei died at Tikitiki in 1920 aged 94; his daughter died two years later and was buried in the family plot at Putiki. Her two married daughters continued to own the property but leased it out until 1934 when Tikitiki was sold and the family links with Putiki were lost. The house has been in European ownership ever since.

Tikitiki the house was founded on large diameter totara tree trunk piles supporting flat 6"x4" bearers, 6"x2" joists and wide tongue and groove kauri floors. The walls are constructed from mortise, tenon and wedge-jointed 6"x4" kauri framing through 6"x4" bearers. They are lined with exterior overlapping flat weatherboards. Some of the original narrow near-flush corner facing-boards are still evident. There was no kauri growing in or near Wanganui so it is relatively unusual to find kauri construction in a local house. Most of the timber imports to Wanganui listed in the newspaper at the time were white pine from Pelorous Sound. However, between 16 September and 6 November 1867, 295,000 board feet of kauri timber plus doors and sashes were imported to Wanganui in six shipments from Auckland, the Kaipara and Mercury Bay³⁹. Some of this timber would have been used in the construction of Tikitiki. Oral history records the timber being punted across the Whanganui River, the only method of transporting such goods from the wharves on the right bank prior to the opening of the town bridge in 1871.

The interior walls of the house are lined with wide interior sarking originally finished with scrim and wallpaper but now gibbed and papered. The roof was probably sheet corrugated iron fixed to flat wide sarking with handmade nails⁴⁰. The ceilings are wide rimu boards and shaped cover battens to the main spaces and colonial bead edge profile tongue and groove to the secondary spaces. Upper level ceilings have steep skillion attic sides originally sarked and wallpapered down to around 900mm from floor level. The original fireplaces and surrounds are still evident in the lower rooms and upper main bedroom which has a cast iron grate. The construction of Tikitiki including the exterior and interior detailing throughout is very similar to the 1867 addition to Netherdale, the house built by its carpenter owner, Thomas McWilliam and his two sons.

[Fig 2]

The house has undergone several generations of change over the years but retains most of its original character. It has a very simple plan of four main habitable rooms on each level linked by a central passageway at the lower level and a central lobby space at the upper level. These were supplemented by lean-to's over the front entry and stair, over the wash house and rear entry, and by a verandah to the north of the lounge.

A second generation of construction work occurred to the house probably in the early 1900s when Charlotte and William Forsythe returned to live in the house. The lounge was doubled in size to create a space of proportions more suitable for entertaining and became what is now known as "the long room". The northeast verandah was also extended around the extended lounge and over the main entrance doors. It is likely that the current front door and sidelights, and possibly the front bay window, date from this period. Additions to the rear of the house extending the washhouse area, providing a copper, a bath, an adjacent toilet and a covered link may also have occurred at the same time.

Little work occurred over the next eighty years until 1986 when the house was purchased by Terry and Rosalind Refoy Butler. By that time, part of the verandah adjacent to the front door had been closed in to form a porch, and a chimney to the kitchen area had been completely removed, possibly after the Murchison earthquake in 1929 or the Napier Earthquake in 1931. The chimney had been external to the house with little structural connection to it. The internal chimney was also lowered in height to just above the roof level probably at the same time. The orientation of Tikitiki and some other houses in Putiki differs from the usual European orientation of the time in that it does not face the street. The house is approached from above and behind but its orientation and front entry face the Whanganui River. The Refoy Butler family undertook major restoration work on the house between 1986 and 1990. The house was brought back from its then extremely poor condition with repiling, rebuilding the internal chimney, reroofing, new verandahs and decks and new interior gib linings.

Tikitiki's third generation of additions and alterations to adapt the house for contemporary family life then took place in 1990 to the design of architect Mark Southcombe and this is how the house first came to our attention. The two previous generations of lean-to addition near the back door were demolished and rebuilt as a new bathroom, toilet and laundry. A new entrance in the same addition addressed the reality of the house's public approach from the rear. A new kitchen and bay window in the position of the original demolished chimney was also built to match the design of the front bay window. Part of the wall between the kitchen and the dining room was removed to link the two rooms and a new window was added to the northeast wall of the long room. This work addressed the house's functional deficiencies, upgrading it to operate as a contemporary family home while minimizing the required changes and the impact on the house's integrity. The garden was also developed extensively at this time, restoring and extending the landscape setting to compliment the house's stature. A group of three original karaka trees remain in the garden.

The historical importance of Tikitiki is now apparent and sets it apart from European houses built at the same time. It was built for a Maori family who played a significant role in the early history of Wanganui and New Zealand. It is a substantial house, more substantial than most built in Wanganui at that time. It is one of the oldest remaining houses in Putiki and Wanganui and it retains most of its architectural integrity despite its original prominence in the landscape being lost due to the development of the garden over the last 20 years. Tikitiki would not be readily identified as Maori architecture yet it is. It reflects extensive European influence in its architecture and the way of life it

suggests. Yet at Tikitiki there are some subtle differences. The carpenter Gothic revival house addresses the river not the street. Its gardens mix karaka with European fruit trees. It was occupied by a signatory to the treaty of Waitangi, one of the last fully tattooed Maori warrior rangatira and a most civilized Maori statesman. Tikitiki marks the active role Putiki Maori had in the establishment of European settlement in Wanganui and how they embraced the advantages of European settlement.⁴¹ Strategic advantage over their traditional tribal rivals was gained by the facilitation and protection of their own European settlement across the river in Wanganui. Paipai's lifetime traversed the pre-European period, the musket wars, the land wars, European settlement and expansion. Tikitiki the house is an enduring testimony to his family's resourcefulness, mana and vision.

¹ Steven Oliver, 'Kawana Pitiroi Paipai', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, Vol 1, Allen & Unwin, 1990.

² Apirana Ngata considered that the Tawito signature belonged to Paipai, as noted in Miria Simpson, *Nga Tohu o Te Tiriti: Making a mark*, National Library of New Zealand, 1990, but it is possible the mark was from Paipai's father, also called Tawhitorangi, who died in 1847.

³ Te Anaua in evidence to Commissioner Spain, hearings held 12-15 April 1843 into the New Zealand Company sale. Cited in Bruce Stirling, *Whanganui Maori and the Crown 1849-1865*, Draft unpublished report for Crown Forestry Rental Trust, 2003.

⁴ Kawana Paipai obituary, *Wanganui Chronicle*, 12 June 1884.

⁵ Revd Richard Taylor, *The Past and Present of New Zealand*, William Macintosh, London, 1868, p276.

⁶ See Jessie Campbell's diaries quoted in RH Voelkerling & KL Stewart, *From Sand to Papa: A History of Wanganui County*, Wanganui, 1986, Ch.3.

⁷ J M R Owens, *The Mediator, A life of Richard Taylor 1805-1873*, Victoria University Press, 2004, p95.

⁸ Papers at Whanganui Regional Museum.

⁹ Alfred Caines of Kaiwhaiki provided roof shingles; his father was an experienced pit sawyer. See Voelkerling & Stewart, *From Sand to Papa*, p130.

¹⁰ Owens, *The Mediator*, p215.

¹¹ Voelkerling & Stewart, *From Sand to Papa*, p19.

¹² Rev Richard Taylor, *Journal*, 18 & 19 January 1846. Transcript, Whanganui Regional Museum.

¹³ McLean Diary, 5 May 1846. MS 1284, ATL.

¹⁴ Voelkerling & Stewart, *From Sand to Papa*, p41.

¹⁵ TB Collinson annotated sketch of Kawana Pitiroi Paipai, 1846, A-292-032, ATL.

¹⁶ Taylor, *The Past and Present of New Zealand*, p256.

¹⁷ Reported in *New Zealand Spectator and Cooks Strait Guardian*, 6 July 1849.

¹⁸ *NZ Spectator and Cooks Strait Guardian*, 6 July 1849.

¹⁹ Richard Taylor sketch dated 2 August 1858, F-28667-1/2 (ATL) plus 1864 photograph of meeting with Featherston after the battle of Moutoa, 1/1000039-G (ATL).

²⁰ *NZ Spectator and Cooks Strait Guardian*, 6 July 1849.

²¹ *Wellington Independent*, 7 March 1865.

²² NZ War Medal awarded for Ohoutahi: Index at Archives NZ.

²³ The first reference to Hori Kerei as the Governor's aide-de-camp in *Wellington Independent* 7 March 1865.

²⁴ *NZ Spectator & Cooks Strait Guardian* 4 October 1862.

²⁵ NZ War Medal Index at Archives NZ: awarded for Tauranga Ika 1869.

²⁶ Voelkerling & Stewart, *From Sand to Papa*, p77.

²⁷ MJG Smart "Wanganui: Early History" in BGR Saunders (Ed), *Introducing Wanganui: The Geography of New Zealand: Study No. 2*, Massey University, 1968.

²⁸ Aotea Maori Land Court Minute Books: Wh1, 24 Jan 1867, pp143-147 and Wh1A, 23 July 1867 pp32-41.

²⁹ *Evening Herald*, 30 November 1867.

³⁰ *Evening Herald* advertisement, 16 March 1868.

³¹ Marriage Certificate, Christ Church, Wanganui 17 April 1969.

³² Anglican Maori Pastorate Burial Records; burial 21 March 1871 at Pihaea Sandhill Cemetery.

³³ Aotea Maori Land Court, Minute Book Wh1D pp492-494.

³⁴ Certificate of Title 3/113 issued 11 March 1874 for Ngongohau No 1.

³⁵ Photograph of mission house and other houses (ATL Denton Collection 236 1/1).

³⁶ Rora Korako, widow of Hakaraia, claimed section Parauiamata 7 at the Maori Land Court in 1901; Walter Hipango testified that this had been her land since the subdivision of Putiki (post 1865) and that she had a house there. Aotea MLC MB 48, 26 Aug 1901.

³⁷ Manse (demolished 1913) photograph (ATL G17097 1/4) reproduced in Delphine Turney, *Our Heritage Forever: The First 150 years of St Paul's Presbyterian Church, Wanganui*, 2003, p19.

³⁸ Harete Forsythe obituary, *Wanganui Chronicle* 27 May 1922 notes the name of her house is Tikitiki.

³⁹ Imports and auctions of kauri reported in the *Evening Herald* 16, 17, 23, 28 September; 17 Oct and 6 Nov 1867.

⁴⁰ The fixing of the roofing to sarking indicates that the roof was originally shingled or intended to be. The evidence of hand-made nails fixing the roofing iron indicates that this was either original or a very early replacement for shingles.

⁴¹ Revd Richard Taylor wrote in 1868: "The natives of this part were attached to the Europeans, and they, on the other hand, had always confidence in their own natives; this kindly feeling between the races was perhaps stronger at Wanganui than anywhere else". See Taylor, *The Past and Present of New Zealand*, p273.