

Old Post Office (now Café Esplanade)

Victoria Esplanade, Park Road, Palmerston North

NZHPT Registration Number:	1267
NZHPT Registration Type:	Historic Place – Category II
NZHPT Registration Date:	25/11/82
City/District Council:	Palmerston North City Council
District Plan Status:	Category 2



Brief History

This 1889 building was Palmerston North's third purpose-built central post office. The first was erected in the Square in 1875 and the second was moved beside the railway station in the centre of the Square in 1880. This third post office was originally located on corner of Main Street and the Square but was relocated several times. It was shifted back, still facing the Square, to make way for the subsequent Post Office when this was built in 1905, and shifted back further and reoriented towards Main Street shortly afterwards. It appears to have been moved again in 1937 when the new Post Office was extended down Main Street. In 1989 it was moved to the Victoria Esplanade.

The original building plans are dated the 5th of January 1891. Construction, which cost £759 9s 11d, was carried out by the firm Burrell and King. The main architectural feature of the wooden single storey building is the imitation brickwork at the corners, called quoins. Alterations were made and the central portion extended forward in 1895.

When the site came up for redevelopment in 1988, the occupier Postbank donated the building to the Palmerston North City Council. The building was cut in to three sections and shifted in the early hours of 10 March 1989 to its new location in the Victoria Esplanade along Palm Drive where it was to function as a tea kiosk. The Manawatu Branch Committee of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (now Historic Places Manawatu-Horowhenua) commissioned an architect's plan and feasibility study of the move, and the Miniature Railway Society donated \$107,240 towards the cost of the relocation and restoration, while the Council oversaw the project and provided the remaining approximately \$120,000 required for the refurbishment, which took place in 1990.

That year the New Zealand Historic Places Trust presented the Council with a National Merit Award for its role in preserving the Post Office. The council initially leased the building to John and Liz Buxton who opened the building as the Palm Grove Lounge, a tea kiosk, restaurant and function venue, in 1990. It currently has new tenants and trades as Café Esplanade.

Principal Sources:

Heritage Trails Working Party, *Esplanade Walk*, Palmerston North, Palmerston North City Council, 1993.

Ian Matheson City Archives, 'Old P.O. Maintenance and General' file number 83/13/14 part 1.

Ian Matheson City Archives, file A175/429.

Palmerston North City Library Photograph Collection: Po 4, 25, 26, 31; Sq 4, 241.