

Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Pukekura Park Victoria Road Entrance Gates

Address

Victoria Road/Pukekura Park, New Plymouth



Statement of Significance

The Victoria Road Entrance Gates were originally erected at the main Liardet Street entrance to Pukekura Park, and were relocated to their present position in 1938 to enable the construction of the present entranceway. The pair of wrought iron gates and steel pillars were first erected in 1886, and were the gift of Mr George Rhind, the Superintendent of Works at the New Plymouth Harbour Works. In 1890, the entrance was enlarged following a fundraising campaign led by prominent local citizen Mr Robert Hughes. Although only portions of the gates were relocated during the 1930s, they have changed little since that time, and are a rare example of a pair of nineteenth century cast iron gates in New Plymouth District. The gates contribute positively to the picturesque setting of the immediate area and are one of a number of features which contribute to the wider special character of Pukekura Park.



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Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description	-
District Plan Item/ Map No.	
Heritage New Zealand List	Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction	1886-1890/1938
Principal Materials	Wrought Steel
Construction Professionals	Arthur Mofflin

History

New Plymouth's Pukekura Park, originally known as the Recreation Ground, was established in 1876. It was the vision of local lawyer Robert Clinton Hughes, who persuaded the Taranaki Provincial Government to dedicate 12 hectares of wasteland near New Plymouth as a recreational reserve.¹ The new reserve was officially opened on 29 May 1876, and was celebrated with the planting of the first four trees on Cannon Hill.²

Many of Pukekura Park's features are the product of generous local benefactors, and the present Victoria Road Entrance Gates are no exception. The early history of the gates is somewhat unclear, but the extant pair of wrought gates and large steel entrance pillars likely date to 1886, and the small sections of wrought fencing to 1890. In December 1884, it was reported that "Mr J. Revell, blacksmith, has just completed a handsome pair of gates which are to be fixed at the Liardet Street entrance to the Recreation Grounds".³ Several men were employed by members of the Recreation Board that same month to complete the Liardet Street entrance, with the Board desirous of having the gates erected by Christmas.⁴ It seems this work was delayed, as it wasn't until February 1885 that the Herald reported that the "presentation gates are now being erected at the Liardet Street entrance to the Recreation Ground".⁵

A year later, at the April 1886 meeting of the New Plymouth Recreation Grounds Board, a vote of thanks was accorded to Mr George Rhind for "his handsome present of a pair of gates, which have been put up at the Liardet Street entrance".⁶ George Rhind arrived in New Plymouth during 1881 following his appointment as Superintendent of Works at the New Plymouth Harbour Works.⁷ He later became chief engineer, and remained with the Harbour Board until 1889. It is currently unclear what happened to the first pair of gates, but a newspaper article from 1891 confirms that the pair present at that time were those gifted by Rhind.⁸

¹ *Taranaki Herald*, 3 August 1916, page 5

² *Ibid.*

³ *Taranaki Herald*, 5 December 1884, page 2

⁴ *Taranaki Herald*, 1 December 1884, page 2

⁵ *Taranaki Herald*, 7 February 1885, page 2

⁶ *Taranaki Herald*, 10 April 1886, page 2

⁷ *Taranaki Herald*, 12 February 1881, page 2

⁸ *Taranaki Herald (Supplement)*, 2 July 1891, page 15

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Entrance gates as they were in 1896, following 1890 additions. New Plymouth Park & Reserves Collection, Puke Ariki, ARC2003-859/3.

Several years later, at the 1890 Annual Meeting of the Recreation Grounds Board, Mr Robert Hughes Senior offered to collect subscriptions to complete the iron gates at the Liardet Street entrance.⁹ In a letter to the *Taranaki Herald*, Mr Hughes noted that the gates gifted by Mr Rhinds “have been left in an incomplete condition and unused for several years past”.¹⁰ Owing to ground subsidence, “it will be necessary to take up the massive iron posts and lay a concrete foundation the whole width of the entrance”.¹¹ He also proposed adding “iron wings, terminating in concrete pillars” either side of the gates, and estimated the work would cost £15.¹² Plans for the new entrance were prepared by New Plymouth builder and architect Arthur Mofflin, who was also responsible for Pukekura Park’s band rotunda.¹³

In early-March 1890, Mr Hughes temporarily suspended his fundraising campaign “owing to the numerous claims upon the liberality of the public, especially the appeal for help from the bush settlers who have been burnt out”.¹⁴ However, in this short time the amount subscribed was £6 18s 6d, of which £4 4s 6d was in the bank.¹⁵ Hughes resumed fundraising in September 1890, and by this time the estimated cost of the work was £25.¹⁶ Tenders for the “removal of the gate and erecting an ornamental fence from Liardet Street into the Recreation Grounds” were called for in late September 1890.¹⁷ It was reported that a start had been made with the work by early October 1890.¹⁸ By late November 1890 the work to reinstate the old gates, construct concrete pillars, and extend the wrought fencing was complete, and the *Herald* noted that it was “a decided improvement on the primitive

⁹ *Taranaki Herald*, 17 February 1890, page 2

¹⁰ *Taranaki Herald*, 18 February 1890, page 2

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *Taranaki Herald*, 25 November 1890, page 2

¹⁴ *Taranaki Herald*, 7 March 1890, page 2

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ *Taranaki Herald*, 6 September 1890, page 2

¹⁷ *Taranaki Herald*, 27 September 1890, page 3

¹⁸ *Taranaki Herald*, 8 October 1890, page 2

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structure that used to serve the same purpose”.¹⁹



Reconfigured entrance gates circa 1910s. One of the Borough Council's first two Nernst Lamps, installed in January 1908, can be seen on the light pole behind the gates. Radcliffe, Frederick George. Sir George Grey Special Collections, Auckland Libraries, 35-R925.

During the mid-1900s the Sports Ground was considerably enlarged, and the western terrace cut-back and re-formed. It seems that at this time (sometime between 1906 and 1908), the entrance gates were reconfigured, with the western turnstile relocated further east, and an additional turnstile added on the eastern side to ease congestion. The gates served as the main entrance to Pukekura Park until 1938, when the present entrance gates were constructed through a bequest from the Estate of Charles Score Sanders.²⁰ Following construction of the new gates, the old 1886 main gates and steel pillars, and a small section of the 1890 fence, were removed, and re-erected at the Victoria Road entrance to Pukekura Park, where they remain to this day.²¹

Reference Sources

See footnotes.

Description

The Victoria Road entrance gates are located at the end of a small no-exit section of lower Victoria Road in New Plymouth City, and are adjacent to Pukekura Park's main children's playground. The setting is picturesque, with a backdrop of mature trees, and the attractive private residences at 5 and 7 Victoria Road located nearby. A modern concrete retaining wall to the west of the gates somewhat encloses the space.

The gates are principally constructed from wrought iron, and mostly composed of vertical spindles between flat bars. Each spindle is capped with a simple moulded fleur-de-lis, whilst the inside ends of each gate is finished with a forged half fleur-de-lis; giving the impression of a full fleur-de-lis when

¹⁹ *Taranaki Herald*, 25 November 1890, page 2

²⁰ *Taranaki Herald*, 7 July 1938, page 2

²¹ *Taranaki Herald*, 9 November 1938, page 6



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closed. The gates hang on pillars of large-diameter cast steel pipe, which are finished with a tapered cap.

A small section of cast iron fencing, in a style identical to the gates, extends from the eastern gatepost, and terminates at a narrow-diameter cast steel fencepost. A narrow opening which once housed a turnstile (the concrete base of which can still be distinguished), leads to another narrow-diameter cast steel fencepost, from which a long, angled section of wrought fencing encased in concrete, extends to the north-east, terminating near the garage of 7 Victoria Road.

Assessment:

Historical	These gates have significant historical significance for their at least 130-year association with Pukekura Park and are one of the oldest built structures to survive within the Park. The gates were donated by George Rhind, who played a significant role in the construction of the first New Plymouth breakwater; one of the most important construction projects undertaken in the Province during the nineteenth century.	✓
Importance to Community	-	
Architecture & Construction	These gates are associated with respected local nineteenth century builder and architect Arthur Mofflin.	✓
Setting and Context	Located at the popular Victoria Road entrance to Pukekura Park, these gates contribute positively to the picturesque setting of the immediate area, and to the wider special character of Pukekura Park.	✓
Archaeology	-	
Representativeness, rarity and integrity	Although only portions of the gates were relocated during the 1930s, they have changed little since that time (except for the loss of the turnstile). They are a rare example of a pair of nineteenth century cast iron gates in New Plymouth District.	✓
Meets threshold for listing (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓