



Bird Road School

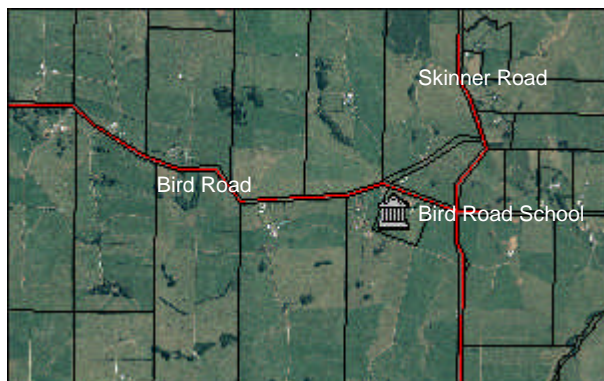
Bird Road

1888

Use: None, former school
Materials: Timber
NZHPT Registered: Not registered
Legal Description: Pt Sec 14 DP 347 Blk VI Ngaere
SD

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



In 1888 a group of Bird Road settlers met in H.W. Hann's home to organise the first school committee. The Wanganui Education Board agreed to support this newly formed school, which was subsequently opened in a cottage on Mr. Fitzpatrick's farm. Miss M. McKay was the first teacher and she instructed a group of 22 students, coming from six different families.

In winter of 1890, a ten acre section was taken from the Education Reserve and the area was felled in preparation for erecting the school buildings. However, due to the poor road conditions, delays occurred and the school was not able to be used until October 1891. It was during this year that the school merged into the control of the Taranaki Education Board. There was an interim closure from the end of 1891 until 16 March 1892, because no teacher had been appointed.

In 1898, Skinner Road South was opened up, resulting in more pupils from that area attending school. The most remarkable difference occurred in 1910, when a swing bridge was installed over the Patea River, creating an influx of 25 new students at Bird Road School in one day.

In 1913, a porch was added (this later served as the staffroom) and two years later a junior room was added to cater for the increased roll. In 1931 an unemployment scheme was undertaken and consequently the grounds were greatly improved. The first concrete tennis and netball court area was laid in 1943, being removed and re-laid in 1963 to make it larger (a higher fence was also installed at this time). The projects were completed by community working bees, the volunteers offering not only their time, but also their equipment, machinery and of course their expertise.

In 1950 the Pukengahu Rugby Club asked the school committee for permission to use the school grounds. Until then, their playing field had been a sloping paddock which was unsuitable for organised sports. Consequently the school and Rugby Club raised £250 to remove hedges, level the land and re-sow the grass. Later a retaining wall was built and the end result was beneficial to both parties.

In September 1970, plans for a new building were received. It was to contain a new senior room, and new toilets, a storage area, staffroom, cloakroom and water supply in a concrete tank were also allowed for. Progress began on the 10th of August in the following year, with the pegging out for the new building, and on the 23rd the earthwork and ground preparation was started. It was discovered, however, that no permit had been obtained for that site, so work was halted and a new site had to be chosen. On 6th September, the construction began on a new site that had been issued a permit.

On the 2nd of February the school was reopened with the new building complete and the renovations finished on the old building. This had been returned to a single room to be used solely for junior students and, along with the new facilities, was officially opened on 23 June 1972. Bird Road School could then boast the newest and the oldest classrooms in the area governed by the Taranaki Education Board.

The Bird Road School was closed 18 July 1997 due to small roll numbers, with pupils instead going in to Ngaere School.

Bibliography:

Bird Road School Centennial: 1888-1988, History of District: 1880-1988
Council Records