



# Douglas Primary School

**Ohura Rd**

**1906**

<b>Use:</b>	None, former school	<b>Historic Value:</b>	2 out of 5
<b>Materials:</b>	Timber, iron roof	<b>Architectural Value:</b>	1 out of 4
<b>NZHPT Registered:</b>	Not registered	<b>Technical Value:</b>	- out of 2
<b>Legal Description:</b>	Lots 16-18 DP 2359 Lot 22 DP 2950 Town of Douglas Blk XIII Ngatimaru SD	<b>Symbolic Value:</b>	- out of 3
		<b>Rarity Value:</b>	- out of 2
		<b>Townscape Value:</b>	1 out of 2
		<b>Group Value:</b>	- out of 2
		<b>Overall Heritage Value:</b>	<b>4 out of 20</b>



The Douglas community began to be settled in 1889, when T. Bayly sold sections. By March 1905, the inland railway had reached Douglas Road, and so the Douglas Township grew dramatically with the inclusion of a dairy factory, post office, telephone office, butcher, baker, blacksmiths, stables, and a fruiterer.

The number of families that settled in the district made a school essential. The opening of the Douglas Hall in 1905 provided a building in which this school could be started; consequently in 1906 Douglas School was officially opened in the supper room. Miss Laura Riley was the first teacher, a school committee was formed, and there was a total roll of 17 pupils. The roll rapidly increased, with 31 pupils attending school in the following year.

This large number of pupils made the supper room rather too small, and so the next teacher (Miss Lilla Finnerty) moved the pupils into the big room of the hall, which had the added bonus of more windows. The school did not have use of the main room of the hall, as the hall and school committees could not reach an agreement on the price. At this time, children were not automatically moved up to the next class at the beginning of a new year. Rather, the promotion depended upon the child's exam results.



The railway moved on from Douglas, but the population continued to prosper, with drainage schemes, bush felling and sawmilling keeping labour in the district. This permanent labour ensured the township would continue to have a steady population, and so the school committee felt confident enough to build a separate school building. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 1912, the new school was opened on the hill, with the children themselves levelling the assembly ground.

The roll continued to grow, with an assistant teacher being appointed in 1914, and the roll reaching a maximum of 60 pupils in 1917.

Douglas School only has a few records of closing because of epidemics, which were a common occurrence in schools in those days. This included the Influenza Epidemic in 1918, but fortunately there are no records of pupils dying.

During the war years, Douglas became a sole charge school, with an assistant being appointed again in 1943. The older boys at this time became responsible for digging slit trenches in approved positions in the school grounds.

The school building was modified and upgraded numerous times. In 1934 a concrete assembly was laid, and around this time electricity was installed. A major change occurred in 1953, when the school building was shifted from the hill to the site it is situated at now. This created a large amount of work, with the community coming together for working bees to remodel and renovate the building, as the original plans had fallen through because of a change in policy. The area was levelled and fenced, paths and an assembly area concreted, septic tanks installed, and the grounds laid out. In 1963, the school was connected to the village water supply and by 1970 the

roll was large enough for a new classroom to be built onto the original school building. (This was due to the consolidation of Tututawa School at Douglas).



The Douglas Township gradually wound up, with changes in the dairy industry causing the Douglas Dairy Factory to close. Families left the district, and by 1990 the only businesses left running were Old's Engineering and the Douglas Garage. The school continued on, with the roll steadily decreasing.

Douglas School has since closed down. However the building remains, almost as a memorial for the large number of people who have had a connection to it and who have many happy memories of the school.

### **Bibliography**

Church, Ian; *The Stratford Inheritance*, The Heritage Press (1990) p57  
*Douglas: A Taranaki Rural Community*