



Marco School

Ohura Rd

1898

Use:	School	Historic Value:	2 out of 5
Materials:	Timber weatherboards	Architectural Value:	1 out of 4
NZHPT Registered:	Not registered	Technical Value:	- out of 2
Legal Description:	Pt Sec 110 Blk XII Pouatu SD	Symbolic Value:	- out of 3
		Rarity Value:	- out of 2
		Townscape Value:	1 out of 2
		Group Value:	- out of 2
		Overall Heritage Value:	4 out of 20



During the 1890s, the settlers of the Whangamomona District decided that a school was a necessity, as with no local school available to meet the education needs of the children, the children were falling behind. The pressure from the settlers grew into a meeting of protest, and with this, the district secured a school.

On 21 March, 1898, Upper Whangamomona School was opened, becoming the second school in the Whangamomona County, and the first school in the eastern end of the county, situated about four miles from Whangamomona. The opening was celebrated with a concert and dance – the piano being carried by a group of men all the way from Whangamomona. The school was a two-roomed building with dimensions of 39'6" x 22', and served as a classroom and a teacher's residence. The total cost of the school was £350.

The 37 original pupils came from as far as Tahora and Whangamomona – usually traveling the distance on horseback. Family names included Roger, Shewry, Baker, Dornbusch, Pearce, White, Davis, Hodder, Martin, Callingham, Gleeson, Reed, King and Scott. The teacher was Mr. S. Scott, who held the position until 1905. He noted that *“contrary to expectations they (the pupils) are being orderly and respectful.”*

In November 1905 the school name was changed to Marco, the name of the road the school is situated on. This was because of a school being opened (about a year earlier) in the Whangamomona township. Marco Road had been named after the dog owned by Mr. Sladden, the district surveyor. The dog was killed by a huge boar in the middle of the road line while out pig hunting, which is why the school sign features a dog (see picture on right).



Marco School became the social centre for the district, which meant that the community was actively involved in the school's activities. This made upgrading the building and resources an easier task, as more people were willing to give voluntary labour. From 1909, the teacher boarded with the local residents, as extra room was needed for the pupils at the school. Right from the start, work was done to try and improve the grounds – the older boys started to clear the area for football, money was raised via a subscription list for sports equipment, a clay tennis court was added in 1914, (with a concrete tennis court being laid in 1926) and a basketball court was introduced. In 1938, the school was remodeled to make the existing room two separate classrooms, and in 1956 the swimming pools were built.

Other exciting developments to occur were the instillation of a chip heater to boil water in 1928, the introduction of flushing toilets in 1955, a film projector being purchased in 1959, and power being switched on at the school house at 2:56pm on 17 September, 1959 (the power reached the school in March the next year). A new room was also built during this year, with the senior pupils being taught in here, and the back room being converted into a film room. A sick bay was also created from the old Telephone Exchange from Whangamomona, donated to the school by Telecom.

The roll, as was with all school rolls in the early days, was heavily influenced by the weather, and the methods of travel available. Heavy floods made the bad roads virtually impassable, and

the attendance in these seasons was often below half the roll. This can be seen in the records for the winter months of 1899 – the roll was 38, but average attendance sat at only 16. The roll fluctuated greatly over the years – in 1903 56 pupils were enrolled at Marco, by 1926 this had dropped to 16, and during the 1950's and 60's the roll was at a stable 25-35. The peak roll occurred in 1912 when the railway started running through, and 86 pupils were attending.

The roll was also influenced at various times through other schools closing. In 1929, Hurimoana School closed, and 6 pupils transferred over to Marko. Tahora School children attended Marco for two weeks in June 1960 when their teachers resigned, and six pupils from Whangamomona School joined Marco in 1979 while their school was closed temporarily due to small numbers (this closure then became permanent).

The school was often closed due to various epidemics – with records showing the school closed for a month in 1901 due to influenza, a month in 1903 because of whooping cough, and a month in 1923 from measles. Infantile Paralysis was a continuous epidemic until 1947, and there are reports of mumps and Bacilli Dysentery. Life in such a remote area was hard, the lack of medicine or doctors making sickness a feared event.

In January 1902, the school was closed for a different reason – Mr. Joseph Hewitt, a settler, was found unconscious on the school ground. After being carried into the teacher's residence, he died, with police demanding the body to remain there until an inquest was carried out.

The Marco School pupils formed a committee in 1937, adopting the school motto of "*Not Self but Service*". Nowadays, that motto has changed to become "*I can and I will*".

Marco's roll currently stands at around 12 pupils, and the last ERO report highlighted the attractive, well maintained grounds and buildings that Marco School takes pride in, and the high level of community participation and support that has continued on from the beginning of this school.

Bibliography

History of Whangamomona County

Marco and District School Reunion 1898-1980

Church, Ian, *The Stratford Inheritance*, The Heritage Press (1990) p90