



# Raekohua School

**Raekohua Rd, Tangarakau**

**1926**

|                           |   |                                |             |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Use:</b>               | Private                                       | <b>Historic Value:</b>         | 1 out of 5  |
| <b>Materials:</b>         | Timber, iron roof                             | <b>Architectural Value:</b>    | - out of 4  |
| <b>NZHPT Registered:</b>  | Not registered                                | <b>Technical Value:</b>        | - out of 2  |
| <b>Legal Description:</b> | Sec 12 15 16 25 Pt Sec 7 Blk VII<br>Pouatu SD | <b>Symbolic Value:</b>         | - out of 3  |
|                           |   | <b>Rarity Value:</b>           | - out of 2  |
|                           |   | <b>Townscape Value:</b>        | - out of 2  |
|                           |   | <b>Group Value:</b>            | - out of 2  |
|                           |   | <b>Overall Heritage Value:</b> | 1 out of 20 |



Settlers started moving onto land on Raekohua Road in the early 1900s, exploiting the coal seams for local use. During the early 1920s, it was decided to construct an inland railway route, and the Tangarakau Flat was chosen as the site for a township to house the railway workers. In 1925, the flat was cleared of bush, logs and stumps, and a village was formed. The need for a school was very soon apparent, as it was known the construction work would take several years to complete, and a considerable population had assembled there. With families moving in from Tahora, the Public Works Department were able to move a classroom down from Tahora for use as a school, placing it on Bruce Herbert's property.



On the 15<sup>th</sup> of February 1926, Raekohua School was opened, becoming one of the last schools in the county to be established. The name Raekohua became the official (but never used) name of the town. Mr. J.V. McMahon was the sole teacher in charge of the 15 pupils on the roll. The roll increased as the town rapidly grew: by March the roll was 24, it increased to 68 by June, and in August the 100<sup>th</sup> pupil enrolled. By now three teachers were being employed – with Mrs. Lumsden and Miss Moore joining the new headmaster, Mr. Fairbrother. By 1929, the town population was over 850, and two years later the school roll peaked at 148, with four full-time teachers.

Obviously, these unexpected large roll numbers caused numerous problems. Teacher accommodation was insufficient, and the buildings were no longer capable of holding all the pupils. There was a period of time when two teachers with classes of over 80 pupils had to teach in poorly lit, small, and insufficiently equipped rooms. Boxes and old tables were often used as seating, and in 1928 the headmaster taught a class in the draughty corridor, which was continually interrupted by the other classes moving through. By July that year, the school had been completely renovated and re-modelled into a four-classroom building.

The community worked hard in association with the school to create attractive grounds. The playground area was stumped, levelled and even metalled in various places. Gardens were gradually built up, with level playing areas, shrubberies and flower beds being laid down, and the senior boys erecting rustic fences.



The railway was completed on 7 November 1932, and the population of Tangarakau fell rapidly, with the school roll decreasing to 60 by 1934. In 1936 the Tangarakau coalmines were closed, leaving road works as the main employment. The Taranaki Education Board provided Raekohua with a modern building from Rotokare and a teacher's residence from Koru in 1939, although by this time the roll had fallen to 30.

The roll continued to drop, being between 11 and 23 during the 1950s. By March 1959 only two children were attending school, and with no sufficient increase being expected, Raekohua was closed. The teacher's residence is now occupied as a family home, and the original school building is used as an implement shed. (see *insert pictures*).

## Bibliography

*History of Whangamomona County*  
Church, Ian; *The Stratford Inheritance*, The Heritage Press (1990) p100