



# Stratford High School

Swansea Rd

1921

**Use:** School  
**Materials:** Brick, concrete  
**NZHPT Registered:** Not registered  
**Legal Description:** Lots 2-15 DP 1874 Lots 1 & 2 DP 5744 Pt Sec 84 Blk II Ngaere SD

**Historic Value:** 3 out of 5  
**Architectural Value:** 2 out of 4  
**Technical Value:** 1 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:** 7 out of 20

**Overall Heritage Value of School Gates:** 9 out of 20



Before 1919, Stratford only had one main school – The Stratford District High School – at which both primary and secondary students attended. This had been established in 1898, and by 1918 the school had a total roll of 781 students, the principal being Mr. Tyrer. This led to the discussion during a meeting of the General Council of Education in February of that year that a Technical High School needed to be established, with Latin as an essential subject. This idea was approved, but the provision of money was still a long time off.

In 1915, the March entry for the school log recorded "*Inspector Gill discussed the question of establishing a separate High School and visited the proposed site*". Mr. Tyrer had already started striving for this proposal earlier in the year. In 1917, the Chairman of the Taranaki Education Board recommended the purchase of the Swansea Road site and the Minister visited the site stating he would look into the matter.

The 1919 opening roll was 822 students. The sub-committee of the Stratford School interviewed the chairman of the Education Board about the possible erection of the Technical High School on a 14 acre section adjoining the Model Dairy Farm. The Chairman then interviewed the Minister of Education in Wellington, resulting in a grant of £500 being given for the project. The actual provision of funds however, ended up taking another four years and secondary students were forced to remain in cramped conditions at the Juliet, Fenton Streets site.

On Monday, 27 October 1919, the foundation stone for the new Technical High School was finally laid by the Hon. J.B. Hine, Minister of Internal Affairs. However, progress towards the building of the new school was slow, and it was another two years and four months before the school actually began to function. In August 1920, an agreement was made between the Taranaki Education Board and J.T. Julian of Auckland, giving a sum of £15,775 towards the building of the new school.

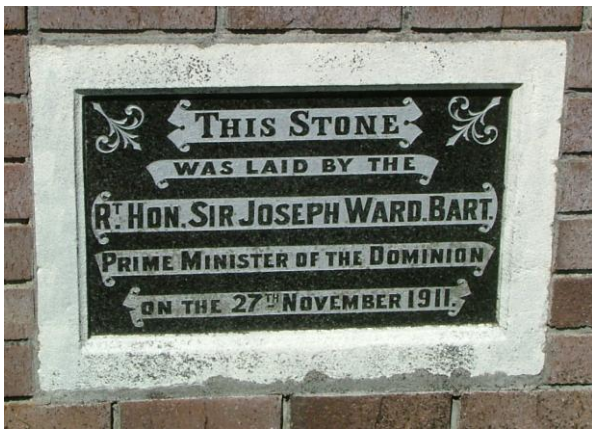
In June 1921 Mr. Tyrer reported to the School Committee that the full list of equipment needed would probably cost £4,000, the science lab would cost £1,000, and a path from the street to the main entrance was a necessity. He felt that it was very unlikely the Education Department would give a grant for these costs, and said that actions should be taken to raise this money. However, the committee discarded this advice and decided to do nothing, as they felt that the new Board of Governors would have ample time to deal with such things. This faith was misplaced, the formation of the grounds fell short of what was required, and not surprisingly, Mr. Tyrer resigned.



Inscription reads: *This stone was laid by Hon. J.B. Hine, Minister of Internal Affairs, 27 October 1919*



Inscription reads: *Stratford Technical High School, Taranaki Education Board, This school was opened by the Hon. C.J. Parr Minister of Education on March 14<sup>th</sup> 1922.*



*Inscription reads: This stone was laid by the Rt. Hon. Sir Joseph Ward Bart, Prime Minister of the Dominion, on the 27<sup>th</sup> November 1911.*



*Stone unveiled in the memory of Private Lionel Eric Smith of the Hawera Mounted Rifles, senior member of the first secondary class at SDHS 1897.*



1922 did not start well either. The Stratford Technical School was not opened in time, the architect giving the reason that there had been a delay in securing a grant for the furniture. This meant that the 163 students had to start the school year in the old buildings, with the new principal, Mr. A.H.R. Amess.

Eventually, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 1922, the Hon. C.J. Parr, Minister of Education, opened the new High School. (Although the pupils had already started there the day before, with an increased roll of 176). The school had a staff of seven permanent teachers, and five itinerant instructors.

For a number of years, cookery, woodwork, metalwork and drawing classes were continued in rooms at the old technical school building, and students were shuttled there as their timetable permitted, as there were no properly equipped rooms at the new school.

The routine at the school included prayers and Scripture readings at the daily morning assembly (held in an empty classroom as there was no school hall at this time). The boys were able to carry out studies at the neighbouring Government experimental farm, and all students were able to play sports on the basketball grounds, football field, concrete cricket pitch, and tennis lawn.

Stratford has continued on as a successful High School. The stones recently set into the bricks at the entrance to the school serve as a constant reminder of the school's varied history, and would jolt many past students' memories. This wall, and the school itself, are invaluable to the community, helped by the large numbers of people who have (or have had) a tight connection with this school.

## **Bibliography**

*Stratford Primary School Centennial 1882-1982  
A Century of Education*