



# Post Office

Ohura Rd, Whangamomona

1911

<b>Use:</b>	Commercial – craft shop	<b>Historic Value:</b>	3 out of 5
<b>Materials:</b>	Weatherboard façade, iron roof	<b>Architectural Value:</b>	2 out of 4
<b>NZHPT Registered:</b>	Not registered	<b>Technical Value:</b>	- out of 2
<b>Legal Description:</b>	Sec 8 Blk11 Whangamomona Township Blk1 Mahoe SD	<b>Symbolic Value:</b>	1 out of 3
		<b>Rarity Value:</b>	- out of 2
		<b>Townscape Value:</b>	1 out of 2
		<b>Group Value:</b>	1 out of 2
		<b>Overall Heritage Value:</b>	8 out of 20



Whangamomona (the spelling was altered in 1901) was opened for settlement in about 1890. Quite quickly, it developed into a substantial village including shops, schools, a butcher, baker, and a blacksmith.

Mail was seen as a very important communication method with the world outside Whangamomona, with settlers relying on it for information about family and friends who did not live in the district. Men would walk into town to collect their mail, often not leaving for the long journey home until after dark, when the postmaster would finally arrive from Stratford.

For this reason, a post office was opened early on in the development of the settlement – starting on 22 October 1895 in the general store that had previously been built, with Mr. A. Catchpole as the first postmaster. In 1901, a new general store was built by the McCluggage brothers to try and cater for the growth of settlers in the district. A separate room adjoining this store was built for the post office, with Mr. Doon bringing the mail in by packhorse. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May telephone office facilities were added, and by 1910 money order services were added to the post office, with the store's accountant carrying out the postal duties.

New post office buildings were built in 1911 by Mr. E.W. Hodder, where the hitching rail outside McCluggage's Store had been situated. The building had a total cost of £860. The post office did not actually take over the building until 16 November 1912, and the official opening did not take place until 1 July 1914, when W.H. Herries (Minister of Railways) was in Whangamomona to open the extended railway service. Up until this time, Mr. Klee had carried out the postal duties, however, with the office now having a permanent status it was taken over by permanent postal officials.

A manual telephone exchange started to operate in the post office from late 1920, but was eventually replaced in 1967 with an automatic exchange service to the district. During this year the post office was downgraded to non-classified. At this time, the mail was brought in from Stratford by the train, at 6am. However, the trains stopped this service in 1983, with rural delivery vans taking over.

By 1984, the extreme decline of the population of Whangamomona became a concern for the post office management. The operation was noted as being very uneconomical, and the building too old with not enough reason to replace it. However, it was also realised that if the post office closed, nothing else would be able to provide the service to the isolated district. Finally, in February 1988 the post office was withdrawn, after serving the community for 93 years, and employing over 20 postmasters.



In later years, the building was used as a craft shop, but this also closed down as business proved unprofitable. The building now stands in the ghost town of Whangamomona as a reminder of the town's flourishing past, with the post-slot (see *insert picture*) and main sign still extant.

## **Bibliography**

*Whangamomona's History, Original by Whangamomona School Children (1997)*  
*Whangamomona 75<sup>th</sup> Jubilee*  
*NZHPT register*  
*Council Records*