

Puke Ahu Archaeology

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Introduction

Puke Ahu hill dominates central Wellington, both physically and historically. From the time of first human occupation it has been a centre of occupation and action. Both Maori and Pakeha recognised its strategic location and height.

1840 - Pre European occupation and the establishment of Wellington City

The name Puke Ahu was given by Ngai Tara, but its significance was not recorded¹. It is not known exactly what the nature of the pre European Maori occupation on the hill was; whether there was an undefended kainga or a defended pa on the hill.

One of the first plans of Wellington city, SO 10408 (1840) shows the area of Puke Ahu labelled as Cooks Mount. The hill was named for James Cook, and it was significant to the development of the early settlement as a survey trig was placed there. The survey plan notes the area of land as reserve no 10; it was one of the ten per cent of Wellington's town acres intended to be set aside for Maori as "native reserves". Town acres 89 and 90, to the top left of Cooks Mount reserve on Figure 1 and seen coloured slightly darker than the surrounding town acres, were also to be set aside as Maori tenths.

¹ Adkin, 1959: 69



Figure 1: SO 10408, 1840

Early Europeans recognised the strategic advantage of the hill. The New Zealand Company surveyor Mein Smith, being a Royal Artilleryman, noted its military value².

The Government Surveyor, Felton Matthew noted in 1841

"it appears to present many advantages for the military post, should such establishment every be required at Wellington, the ground is of moderate elevation, commanding a view of the whole town, airy and easy of access, having abundance of water at hand; easily defensible and having sufficient space for a very convenient parade ground"³.

² Cooke, 2006:1

³ Cooke, 2006:1

It is prescient, given the subsequent history and use of the hill, that Felton Matthew focuses on a proposed military use over any other commercial or recreational potential.

Felton Matthew also suggested that any military barracks that might be needed should go on the summit of the hill, and also suggested a gaol on the southern boundary. These suggestions were subsequently approved by the Governor of New Zealand, William Hobson⁴.

The original landform of Mount Cook would have originally been much higher than present day: Peter Cooke notes "The hilltop was progressively levelled with each new building"⁵. This can also be seen in subsequent sketches and photos of the hill created through the late 19th century and into the 20th century.

1840-1848 - 1st prison

The first building of European function on the hill was a prison that was functioning by late 1840. (It is noted that the prison was established while the land was still a native reserve).

Ward records that by March 1842 there were "about sixty prisoners...at the Wellington gaol, chiefly mutinous or runaway sailors..."⁶ The building at this time is described as "...a wretched Maori building, large enough for twelve or fifteen human beings at the most"⁷. It is possible this was a building originally constructed as part of Puke Ahu kainga or pa, and appropriated as a prison.

A more substantial prison building had been constructed by 1843; Ward refers to the "new" gaol in reference to a trial held in December 1843⁸. The "Colonial Government gaol" is described by Ward as a two storied brick building, with 18inch walls⁹.

Methven notes that the prison was intended to be a "truncated" version of the large Pentonville prison in London, held to be a model of an ideal modern prison. The Mt Cook prison was to be Y shaped, with a hall and administration offices, and the two three-storeyed wings containing 96 cells¹⁰.

However only a two storeyed sixteen cell "stub" of one wing was actually constructed¹¹. The prison was built from bricks made by the prisoners at the adjacent brickworks.

The building was described in a report to the Resident Magistrate, William Shortland, in 1844

"...a prison wing 33 Feet 6 Inches long by 40 Feet wide and 23 feet 6 Inches in height from ground to the eaves of the building. It consists of two stories with 8 Cells in each Story, and a central hall running the whole length of the Building 10 feet wide and 21 feet high to the Ceiling at the

⁴ Cooke, 2006: 1

⁵ Cooke, 2000:97

⁶ Ward, 1928: 106

⁷ Ward, 1928: 106

⁸ Ward, 1928: 125

⁹ Ward, 1928: 150.

¹⁰ Methven, 2011: 20

¹¹ Methven, 2011: 20

upper end of which is a Staircase leading to a Gallery communicating with the Upper Cells."¹²

Cooke notes that the intention had been for the prison to be at the south end of the Mt Cook summit, allowing the barracks to be at the more prominent northern end¹³ (this spatial arrangement would have placed the might of the military forces into the public view to the north, and largely hidden the prisoners). However Cooke records that the Sherriff chose the location for the prison, and it ended up occupying more space on the hill summit than was anticipated, resulting in less room for the barracks¹⁴.

Ward records the prison was badly damaged in the 1848 earthquake, with the north and south gables thrown out, walls cracked in both stories, and the side walls cracked¹⁵. Cooke notes that the damage to the Mt Cook prison lead to the construction of the Terrace Gaol in the early 1850s¹⁶. Methven records that the Mt Cook brick prison was repaired, and continued to be used to house short-term prisoners at the adjacent brickworks¹⁷ (see below for discussion of the brickworks). Methven also notes that the prison was used into the 20th century, and was demolished in the 1920s for construction of the Dominion Museum.

1840s - 1st military phase

Cooke notes the first imperial troops were stationed at Mt Cook by July 1843, camping at the base of the hill in the area that is now Buckle St, because their barracks on the hill were not complete.

The hill was "lightly palisaded to protect the southern flank of the town" against the perceived threat of Maori following the 1843 Wairau affray¹⁸.

Pressure from an influx of troops fighting at Pauatahanui and in the Hutt Valley in 1846 resulted in construction in 1847 of two temporary wooden barracks on the top of Mt Cook, along with a powder magazine on a small spur on the eastern flank of the hill just north of Ranfurly St¹⁹.

The stone and masonry powder magazine was described by Ward as a one story brick building, with 3ft wide walls, large buttresses all round, and 15 arches covered in solid masonry²⁰. The building also had stone foundations, as it was damaged in the 1848 earthquake; Ward records the building being cracked in each gable and separated from the boundary wall, and cracked in the stone foundations on the north side.²¹

A further influx of troops, including a permanent garrison of the 65th Regiment and Royal Engineers and Artillery, required more accommodation. More space was needed so the whole

¹² Methven, 2011 20-21

¹³ Cooke, 2006: 1

¹⁴ Cooke, 2006: 2

¹⁵ Ward, 1928: 150

¹⁶ Cooke, 2006: 2

¹⁷ Methven, 2011: 22

¹⁸ Cooke, 2000: 97

¹⁹ Cooke, 2006: 2

²⁰ Ward, 1928: 150

²¹ Ward, 1928: 150

hill was set aside for military functions, and the two land parcels on Taranaki St that were also intended as Maori reserves (town acres 89 & 90) were used for military accommodation.

The 1848 earthquake damaged the brick prison and the stone and brick powder magazine. After the 1848 earthquake Cooke records that four new barracks, out-houses and a guard house were built, this time in wood²². (Construction in wood, not brick, was a major lesson learnt from the 1848 earthquake; it changed the architectural face of Wellington and was responsible for a relatively low loss of life in the much larger 1855 earthquake).

Cooke records that the first of two major excavations to lower the hill summit took place in 1848, when the hill was lowered by about 15 metres (45 feet at the time)²³.

The hill summit was sketched by James Crawford in either 1846 or 1847, but prior to the lowering of the hill summit (Figure 2 and Figure 3).

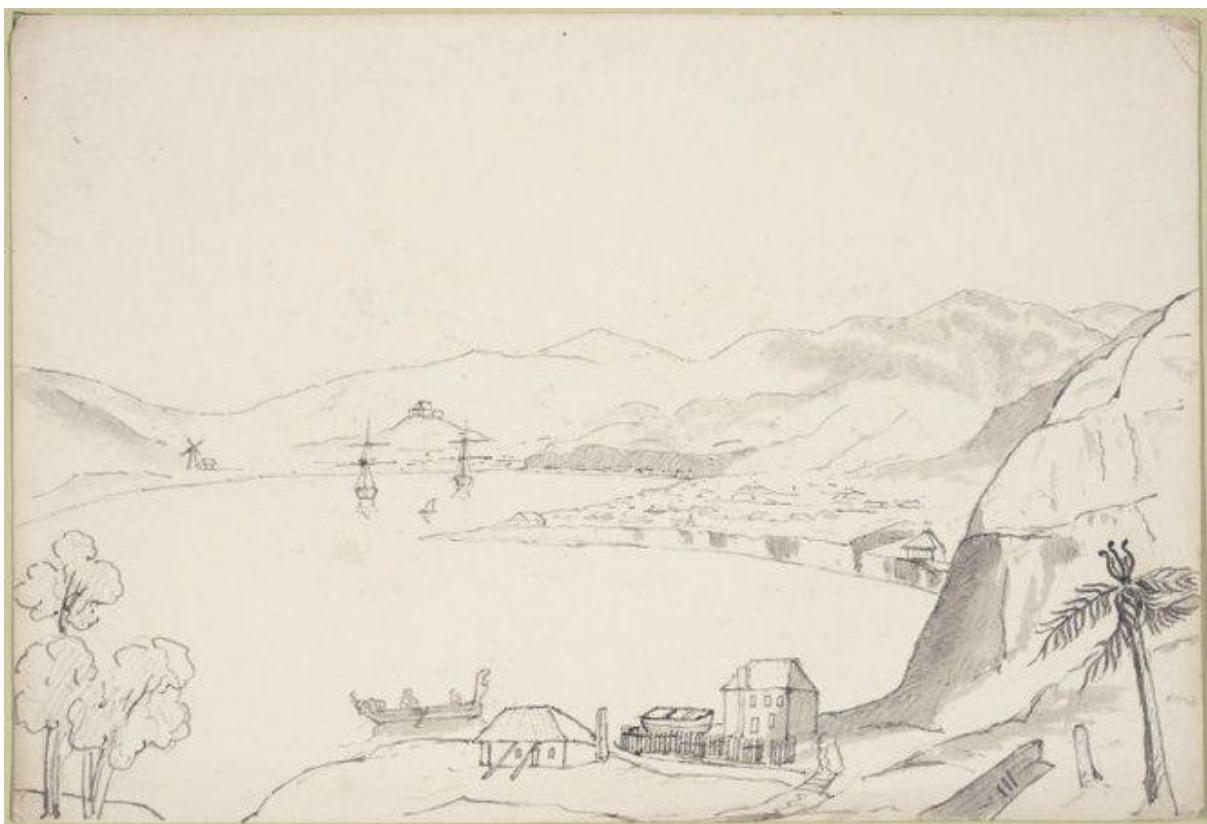


Figure 2: Town of Wellington Port Nicholson N. Zealand, 1846 or 1847?

By: James Coutts Crawford, 1817-1889
Alexander Turnbull Library: A-229-043

²² Cooke, 2006: 2

²³ Cooke, 2006: 2

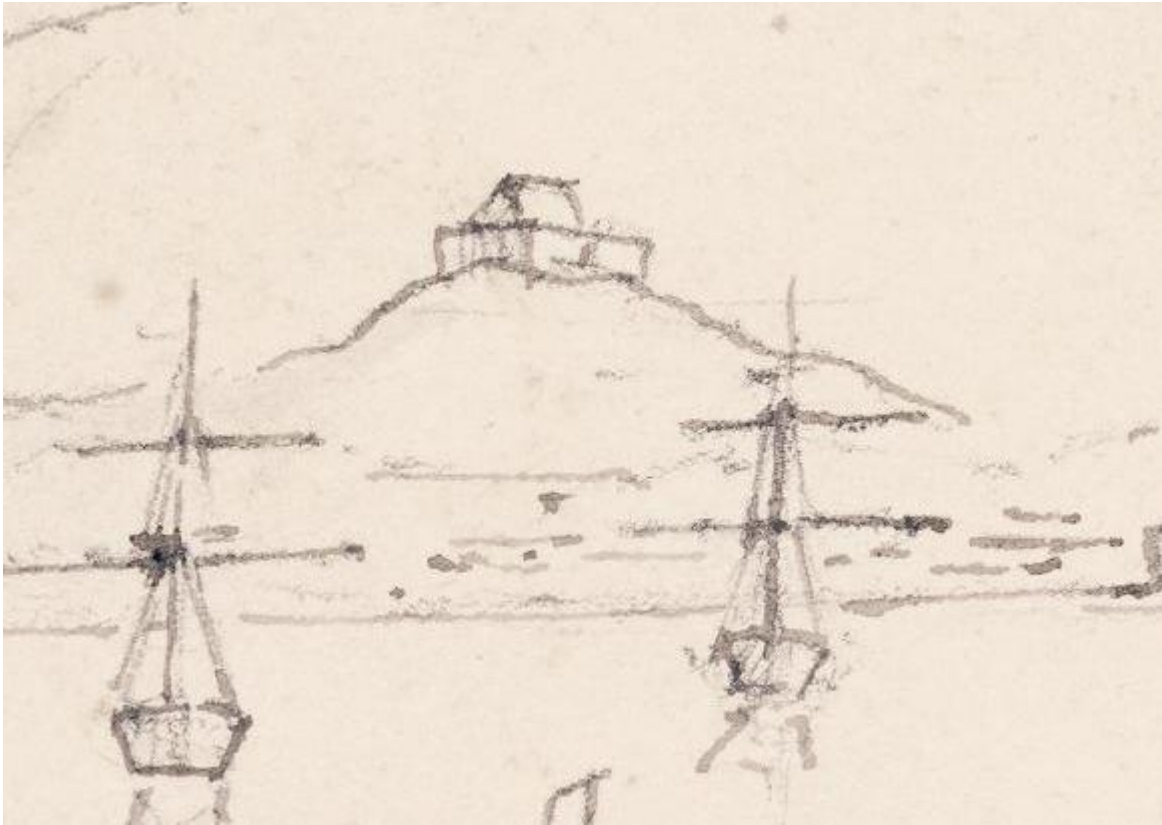


Figure 3: Detail of Crawford's sketch

The first wooden barracks building can be seen on the hilltop; the hill sits high above the Te Aro flat in the foreground.

The hill was sketched again, this time in 1849, after the hill had been lowered and more buildings had been constructed. This sketch by Thomas Collinson shows a large cluster of buildings on the hilltop.



Figure 4: Wellington N. Z. 1849.

By: Thomas Bernard Collinson, 1822-1902
Alexander Turnbull Library: A-292-071

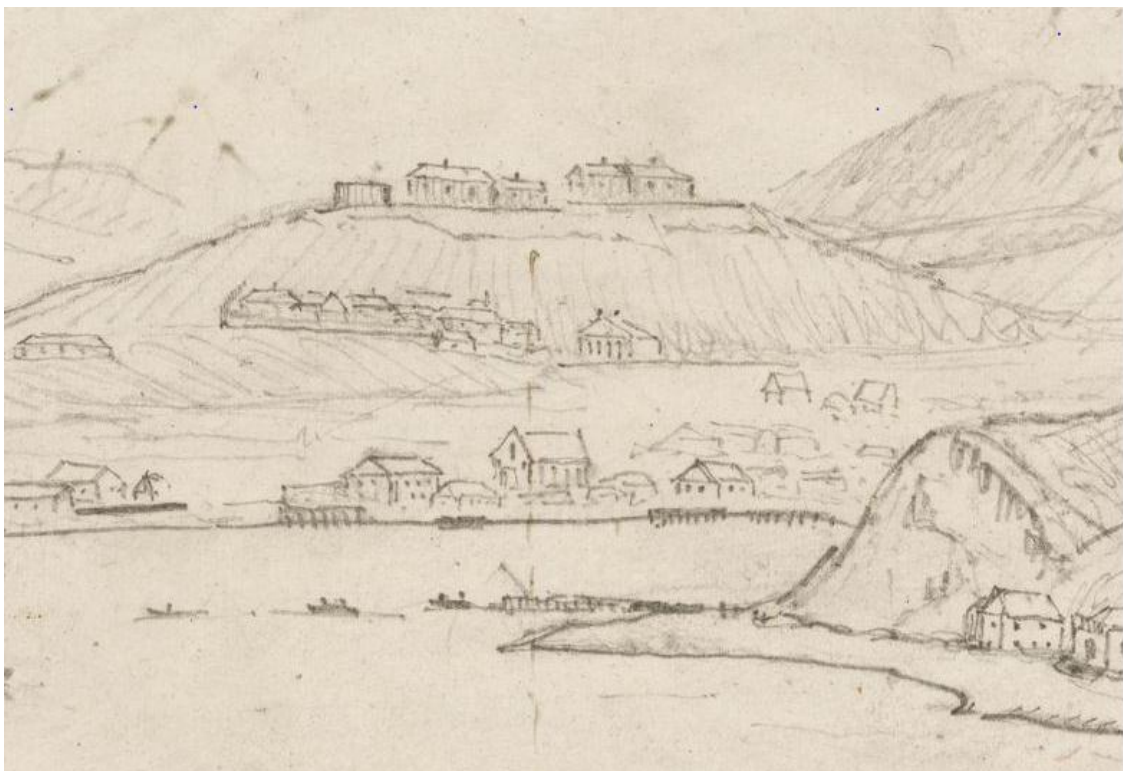


Figure 5: Detail of Collinson's sketch

Additional barracks and associated buildings had also been built along the western stretch of Buckle St in front of the Mt Cook hill. It is probable that the cluster of buildings seen in Collinson's sketch on the slope of Mt Cook below the barracks on the summit is the Buckle St barracks. Cooke notes that from 1847 the identifying terms of "upper Mt Cook barracks" and "lower Mt Cook barracks" were used to differentiate the two sites²⁴.

Figure 6 shows the various buildings and structures on the hill by 1852. Spyve notes this was as planned in about 1845 and largely what was built by 1852²⁵. The alignment of Buckle St is notable: as seen in Figure 1 Buckle St was laid out to run in a straight line between Taranaki and Tasman Sts (as it does today). However Spyve shows it in two, non-aligned sections, with buildings and structures on the northwest corner of where the road now runs. It may be that was simply because the road was not physically formed in 1845, and buildings and structures were placed along what later became roadway.

²⁴ Cooke, 2006: 2

²⁵ Cited in Cooke, 2006:1

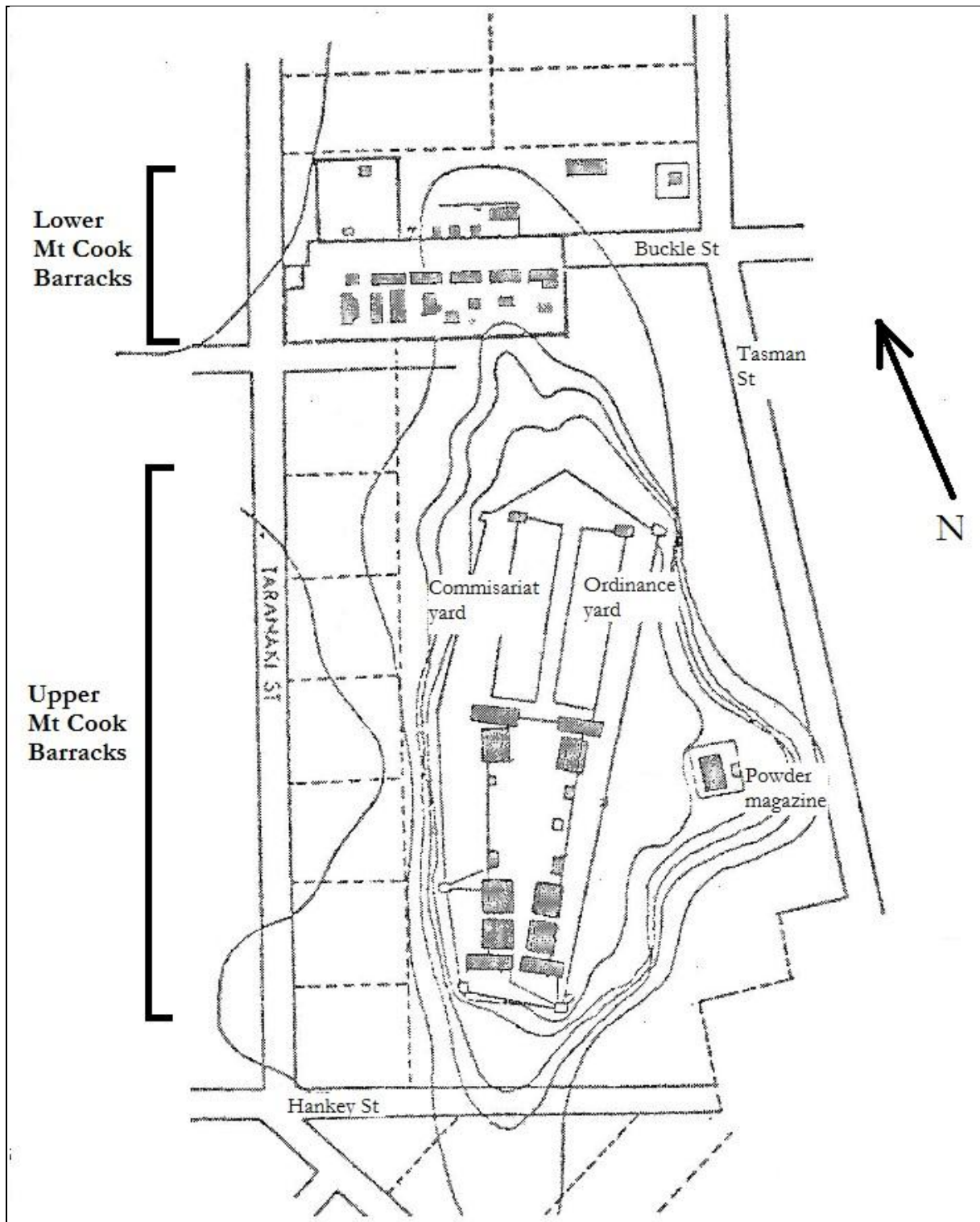


Figure 6: Plan of Mt Cook, as planned c 1845 and largely as built by 1852

Spyve, 1983, as shown in Cooke, 2006: 1

1850s-1880s - 2nd military phase

Thirteen acres of Mt Cook was granted to the military in 1850, as seen on plan SO 10295 (Figure 7), formalising its military status. As seen in Figure 7, this also included two land parcels on the northern side of Buckle St, where the lower barracks had been constructed through the 1840s.

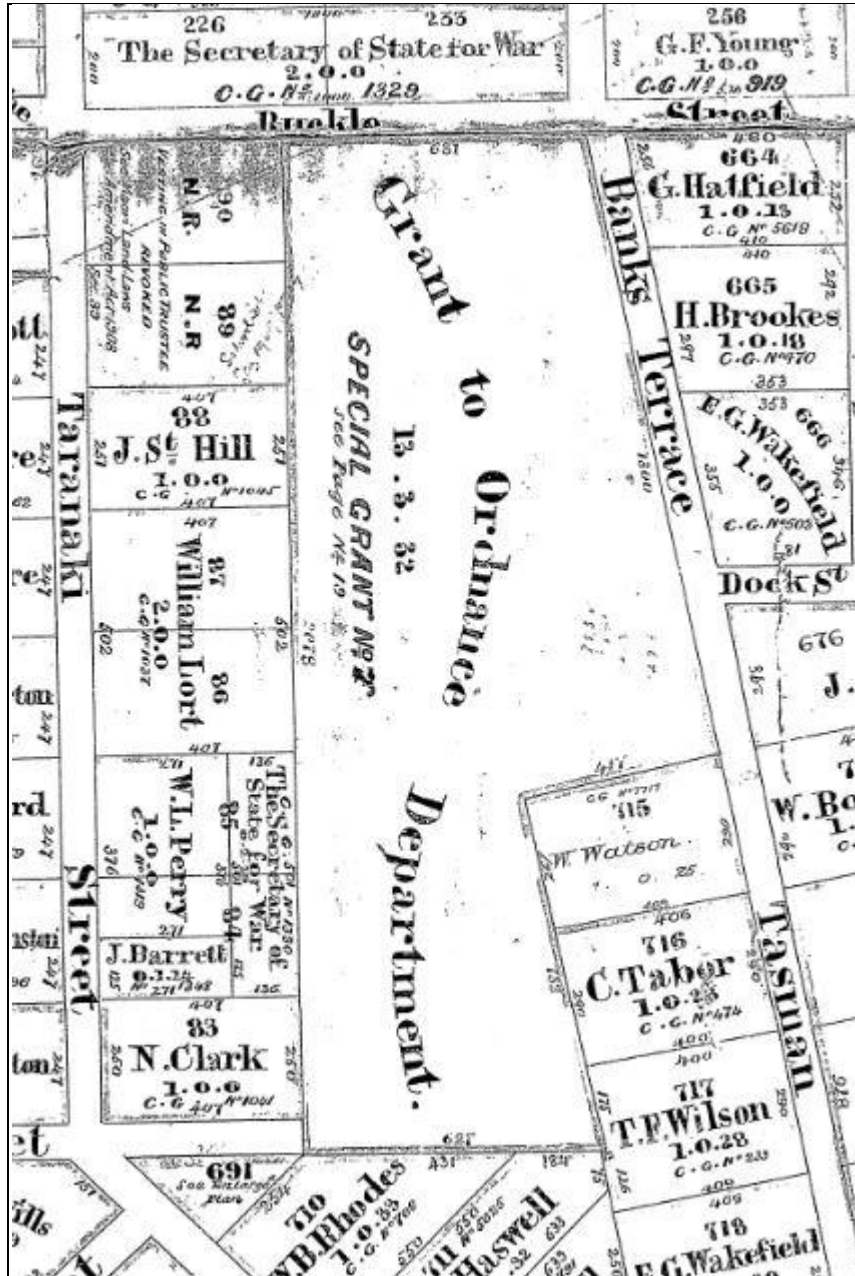


Figure 7: SO 10295, 1879

New buildings were added through the 1870s and 1880s to the lower barracks site, located on town acre 90 on the corner of Taranaki and Buckle Sts, and on the two town acres on the northern side of Buckle St²⁶. Buildings added included drill halls, a gymnasium, a magazine guardhouse, and artillery depot

²⁶ Cooke, 2006: 3



Figure 8: Te Aro, Wellington, photographed by Rev Arthur Stock, 1858

Alexander Turnbull Library: 1/2-055704-F

The Upper and Lower Barracks of Mt Cook military garrison is seen in the background

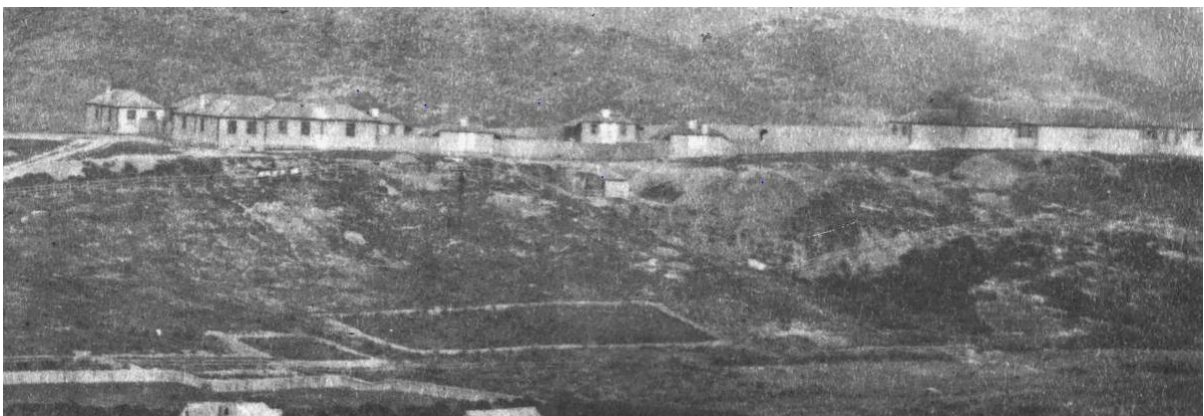


Figure 9: Detail of Stock's photo, showing the Upper Barracks



Figure 10: Detail of Stock's photo, showing the Lower Barrack sin the area of what is now Buckle St

Through the 1880s the lower barracks site was expanded for the NZ Constabulary force, formerly known as the AC or Armed Constabulary²⁷.

Ward's 1891 plan shows the various buildings on the Lower Barracks site.

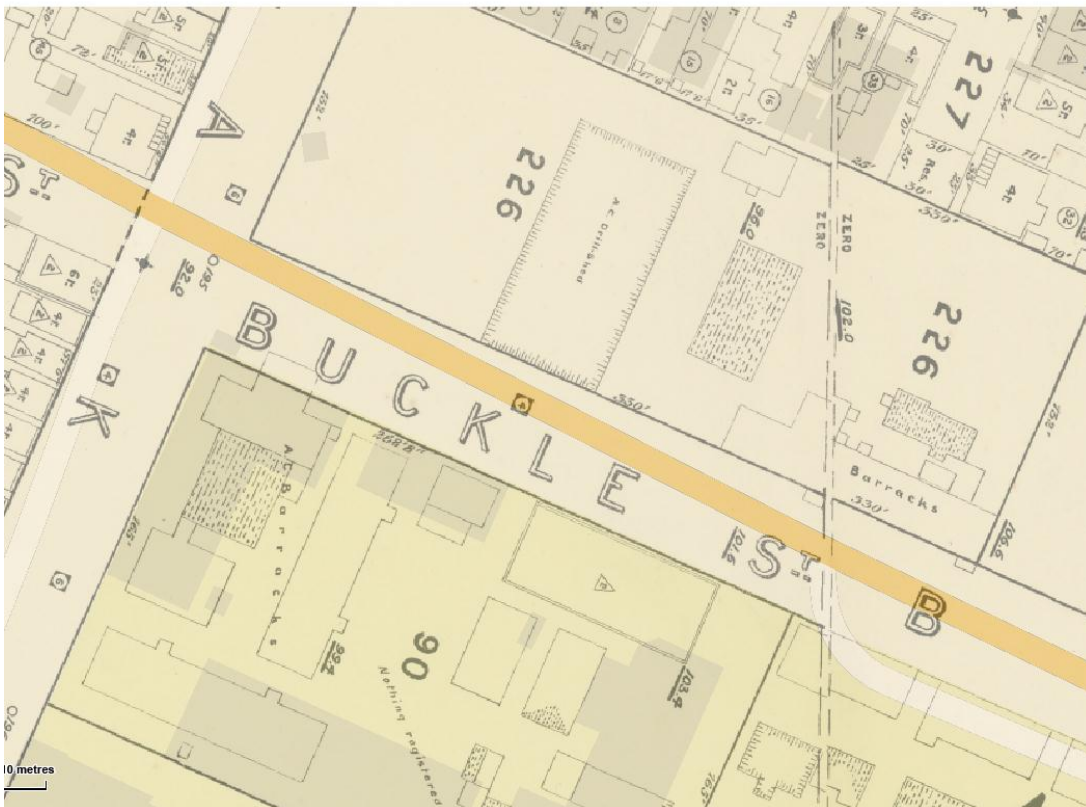


Figure 11: Military buildings on town acres 90 and 226, 1891

Thomas Ward plan, Wellington City Council archives

²⁷ Cooke, 2006: 4

The wooden barracks building in the upper barracks on Mt Cook was used as an immigrants accommodation block from 1874²⁸. By the late 1870s they were being used as a temporary prison. Of particular significance is that the ploughmen from Parihaka were held there in 1879 (Te Whiti and Titokowaru were not imprisoned at Mt Cook; they were at the Terrace jail).

A letter to the Minister of Native Affairs on the situation of the Maori prisoners was published in national papers on 15 August 1879. It noted the construction of a palisade around the prison building, and stated the "natives" were generally in good health.

THE MAORI PRISONERS IN MOUNT COOK GAOL.

The following important report on the Maori prisoners in Mount Cook Gaol has been furnished to the Government by Mr James Mackay :--

Wellington, 29th July, 1879.

Sir,--I have the honour to inform you that the palisading around the Mount Cook Prison is nearly completed. The total cost of the whole works, including repairs and alterations of buildings, gas and water fittings, and graveling the gaol-yard, will be about L750.

The Natives, with the exception of a few suffering from coughs and colds, are in good health, and there is no doubt if the sanitary arrangements for drainage, &c., now in progress are carried out there will be little danger of sickness of a serious character arising.

Otago Daily Times, 15 August 1879

The wooden upper barracks were emptied in 1892 because of an outbreak of typhoid. The site's drains and cesspits were cleaned out, as were the buildings, and the military men moved back in in 1893²⁹.

1883 - 2nd prison

Tenders were called for the construction of the second prison on the Mt Cook site in 1882³⁰. This was intended to be a central "national" prison, in contrast to the Wellington prison on The Terrace.

²⁸ Cooke, 2006:3

²⁹ Cooke, 2006: 5

³⁰ Methven, 2011: 67



Public Works Office,
(Architect's Branch,)

Wellington, 4th February, 1882.

TENDERS are invited for Works at **Mount Cook Prison**. General conditions, specifications, and drawings may be seen at the Public Works Office, Architect's Branch, Wellington. Tenders addressed to the Hon. the Minister for Public Works, and marked outside "Tender for Works at **Mount Cook Prison**," will be received at the above office up to noon of Saturday, the 11th day of February, 1882. The lowest or any tender not necessarily accepted.

By command.

P. F. M. BURROWS,
Architect, P.W.

Evening Post 6 February 1882

The plans for the new prison were presented to Parliament in 1883. The building was planned to have six wings radiating from a circular central hall roofed with a dome.



Figure 12: Plan of proposed Mt Cook prison, Ward plan, 1891

Thomas Ward Plan, Wellington City Council Archives

Thomas Ward showed the intended layout of the prison in his 1891 plan of Wellington city (Figure 12). The intended outline of the building is seen as dotted lines, while the actual structure built is seen as the solid outline at the south end of the plan.

The prison was constructed from bricks made by Terrace jail prisoners at the brickworks located on the southern part of the Mt Cook site (the brickworks had been established in the 1840s). Methven records the hill summit was lowered for the second time by 30 feet (10 metres)³¹.

Construction work began in 1883³². A problem with brick supply meant that construction was sporadic (Methven records local brick suppliers objected to the prison brickworks' supply monopoly), and construction ceased in 1900 with only one wing and the lower stage of the central hall actually built³³.

³¹ Methven, 2011: 67

³² O'Keeffe, 2001: *

³³ Methven, 2011:68

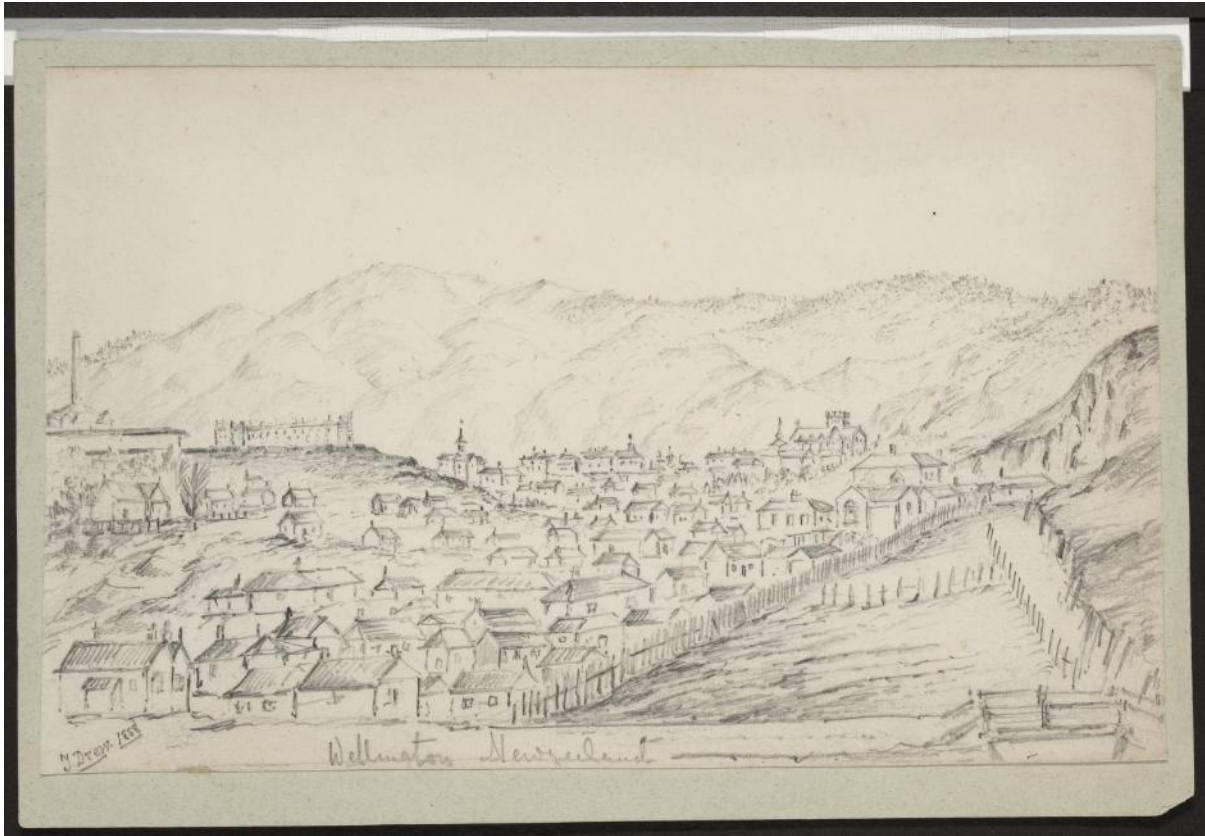


Figure 13: Alexandra Barracks and brickworks chimney on left, 1888

Sketched by T Drew. The tall chimney of the brickworks can be seen on the left, with the Alexandra Barrack to its right
Alexander Turnbull Library. Negatives of the Evening Post Newspaper: A-303-019

The building never functioned as a prison. The proposal for its use as a prison was tremendously unpopular with Wellingtonians: numerous letters to the paper and newspaper articles decried the use of the site for such a purpose. Terms such as "a carbuncle", "a monumental error" and "a frowning prison" were used to describe the building.

THE MOUNT COOK CENTRAL PRISON

TO THE EDITOR

SIR,—The indifference with which the people of Wellington now treat many questions of vital local importance would seem to indicate that there is really good ground for the belief now frequently expressed by many that the presence of the seat of Government has of late years utterly destroyed the public spirit of the community. If the people of Wellington were now like what they were in times past they would certainly exert themselves to prevent the Mount Cook reserve from being used as a site for a central prison. It is to me incomprehensible that so much apathy should exist on this subject. I am satisfied that no other town in the colony would permit a centrally situated reserve to be used for such a purpose. It is in the hope that something may yet be done before it is too late to prevent Te Aro from being for ever disfigured by a frowning prison in its central eminence instead of having that eminence converted into a smiling garden and pleasure resort for the people, that I call attention to this matter. A feeble effort was made by the City Council to get the Government to choose some other site for the prison, but they quietly took the answer the Government gave them, and ceased from troubling further in the matter. One is inclined to

Evening Post, 4 April 1882

THE MOUNT COOK PRISON

The Committee of the Chamber of Commerce have at length taken up the Mount Cook Prison question, and have resolved protest against the erection of the prison being proceeded with. The grounds

Evening Post 6 May 1882

THE MOUNT COOK CENTRAL PRISON.

A PROTEST AGAINST ITS ERECTION.

ON May 17th, a large number of gentleman interested in the welfare of Wellington, interviewed the Hon. T. Dick, Colonial Secretary, for the purpose of protesting against the erection of a central prison within the city boundaries. Subjoined were some of the arguments used:—

Mr J. Mackay, Principal of the Wellington College, said his reason for opposing the erection of the central prison at Mount Cook was based upon the effect it would have upon the young people attending the education institutions in the neighborhood. In education as in everything else, habit was second nature, and we could not be too careful in our endeavors to place

before the minds of the young nothing but the true, the beautiful, and the good. He did not see how young people could fail to be injured by having presented to their eyes daily the spectacle of the most brutish of their kind.

Colonist, 22 May 1882

His Honour Mr. Justice Richmond this morning expressed his views on the Mount Cook Gaol and on prison discipline generally. In regard to the latter he said he had his own views, but they would be expensive to carry out. As to the Mount Cook Prison, he thought it was horrible that the gaol should look down from one of the most magnificent sites in Wellington. It was a perfect wonder to him that it should be erected there, and he viewed it with disgust. He deprecated that view of penal discipline which confined men within such limits, and his own view was that it could not be carried out within such narrow limits. He had no hesitation in saying he looked upon the erection of this building with absolute disgust. He did not know what the authorities thought, but it seemed to him terrible to place a large penal institution in the midst of a large city, and thus put crime in such a prominent position. He did not know what the Te Aro people thought about it, but he would be very sorry to live under the walls of a gaol all his life. The main thing he

Evening Post 6 October 1885

The placing of the unsightly red brick buildings called the **Mount Cook Prison** on one of the most prominent and valuable building sites in Wellington is universally condemned, alike by residents of the city and visitors to it. Voicing this sentiment, Mr E. M. Smith has given notice to ask that prisoners take down **Mount Cook Prison** and build a Parliamentary library with the bricks.

Oamaru Mail, 5 October 1892

Replying to Mr Fisher the Premier said the Government recognised that a mistake had been made in putting the **Mount Cook Prison** on the finest site in Wellington, but £40,000 had been spent there, and the

Auckland Star, 8 April 1897

Various suggestions were made for alternate uses, including becoming a campus for the newly established Victoria University.

Figure 15, Figure 16 and Figure 17, whilst taken when the building functioned as the subsequent Alexandra Barracks, demonstrate how visually dominant the building was, both through its elevated position and its sheer scale and mass.

national system with large electorates.

"That red **carbuncle** on the face of Wellington, the bastille on Mount Cook is how the Labor member for the City describes the new **prison** building in the centre of population.

Oamaru Mail 30 Sept 1897



Figure 14: Mt Cook prison (when it was the Alexandra Barracks), viewed from the south, ca 1929

Alexander Turnbull Library. Negatives of the Evening Post Newspaper: EP-3276-1/2-G



Figure 15: The prison building when it was the Alexandra Barracks, ca 1910

Alexander Turnbull Library. Photographs of New Zealand Scenes: PAColl-0334-01

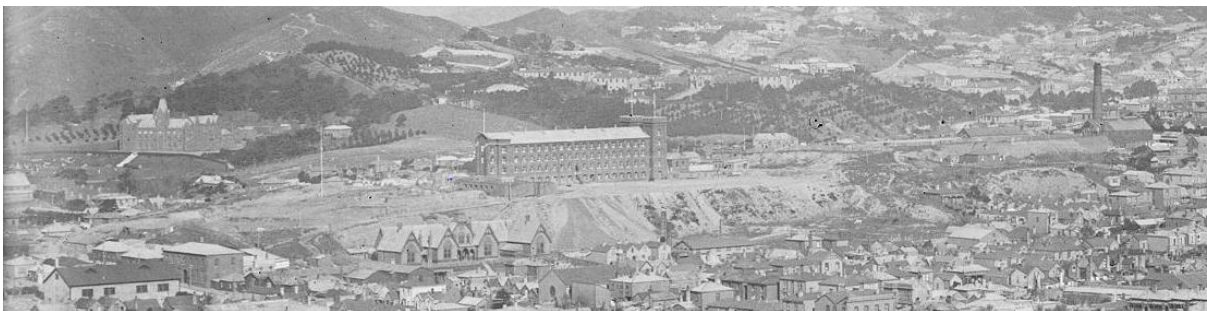


Figure 16: Part 2 of a 2 part panorama of Wellington, looking south from the vicinity of the Terrace Gaol, ca 1910

Photographed by SC Smith

Alexander Turnbull Library. Photographs of New Zealand: 1/1-020268-G

3rd military phase 1899

In 1899 (during the Boer War) the Army took over the unused prison, and converted it into a military barracks³⁴. It was renamed in 1903 as the Alexandra Military Depot, but was commonly

³⁴ Cooke, 2000:97

called the Alexandra Barracks (named for Alexandra, wife of King Edward VII, who took the throne in 1902)³⁵.



Figure 17: Alexandra Barracks, between 1925-1931

Photographed by Robson & Boyer
Alexander Turnbull Library: 1/2-060715-F

³⁵ Named for Alexandra, wife of King Edward VII, who took the throne in 1902

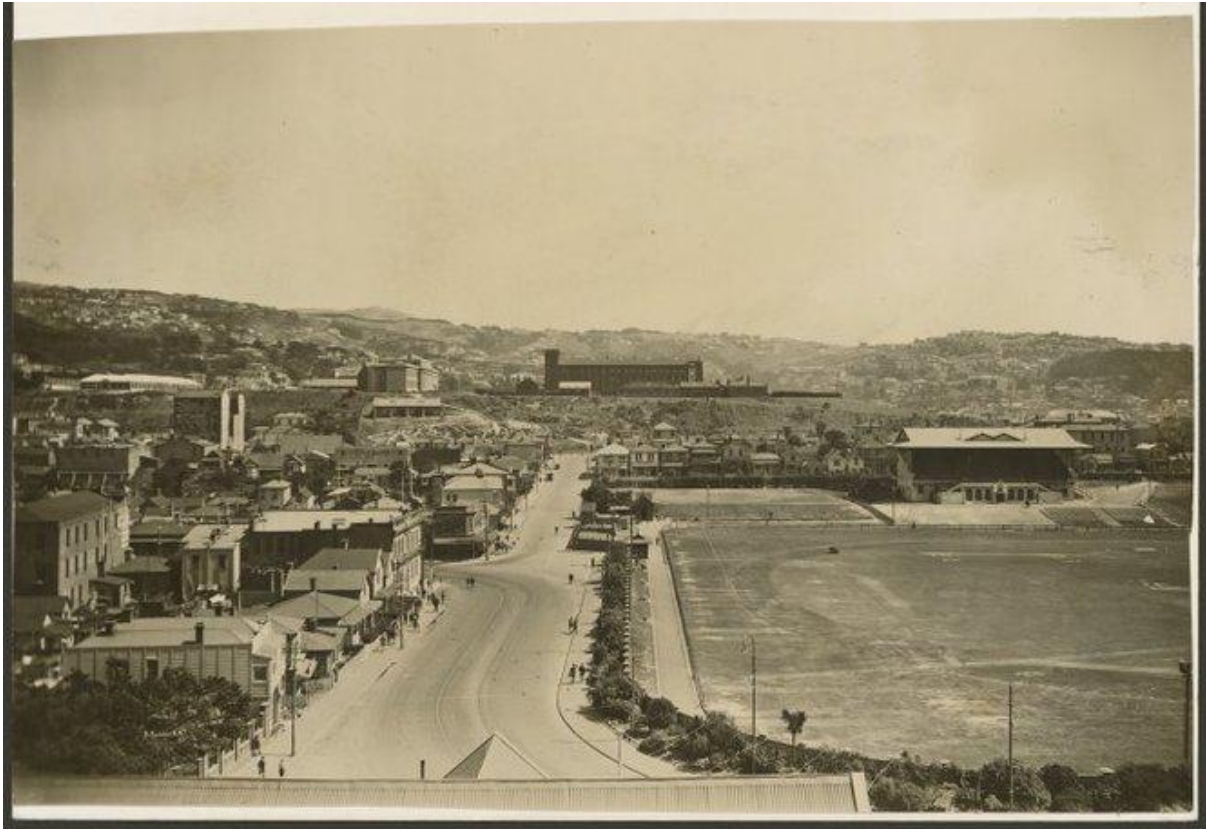


Figure 18: Basin Reserve with Alexandra barracks in the background, Wellington, ca 1928

Alexander Turnbull Library: PAColl-8235

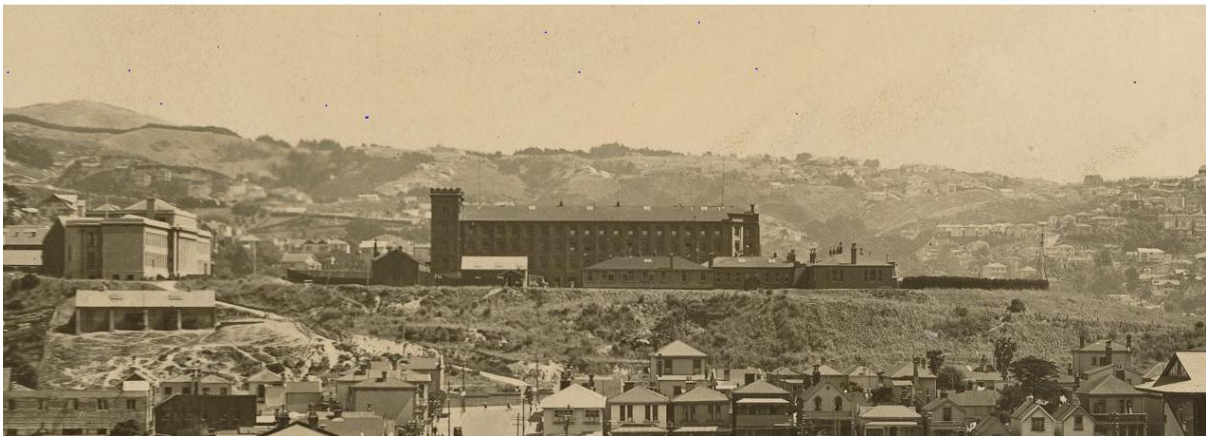


Figure 19: Detail of 1928 photo

The Alexandra Barracks and surrounding buildings at Mt Cook played a role during the 1931 maritime riots, acting as a base for the "Mounted Specials"³⁶.

The prison/barracks building was demolished in 1929-31 in preparation for the construction of the Dominion Museum³⁷.

³⁶ Cooke, 2006: 6

³⁷ Cooke, 2006: 7



Figure 20: Alexandra Barracks, during the 1913 waterfront strike, showing horses for the Mounted Special Police, 1913

Alexander Turnbull Library. Photographs of New Zealand: 1/1-019680-G



Figure 21: Alexandra Barracks, taken from Buckle St, 1913

Alexander Turnbull Library. Photographs of New Zealand: 1/1-019679-G

Brickworks

Part of the attraction of the Mt Cook site was the large deposit of clay at its southern end, suitable for making bricks. A brickworks was established by the early 1840s: the first brick prison on site and the later Alexandra Barracks were constructed from bricks made on the site.

The bricks from the prison brickyards have a distinctive arrow motif impressed in them, indicating their status as crown property. They are seen in many brick structures around Wellington.



Figure 22: Prison brick, wall at Government House, Wellington

Photo M O'Keeffe, 2007

After the prisoners left the Mt Cook prison and moved into the Terrace prison in the early 1850s they continued to march down to the brickworks to make bricks. Methven records that the brickworks produced 2.5 million bricks a year³⁸.

The brickworks site and structures can be seen in plan SO 17327 (Figure 23). This plan shows the brickworks were located at the southern part of the Mt Cook site.

³⁸ Methven, 2011:82

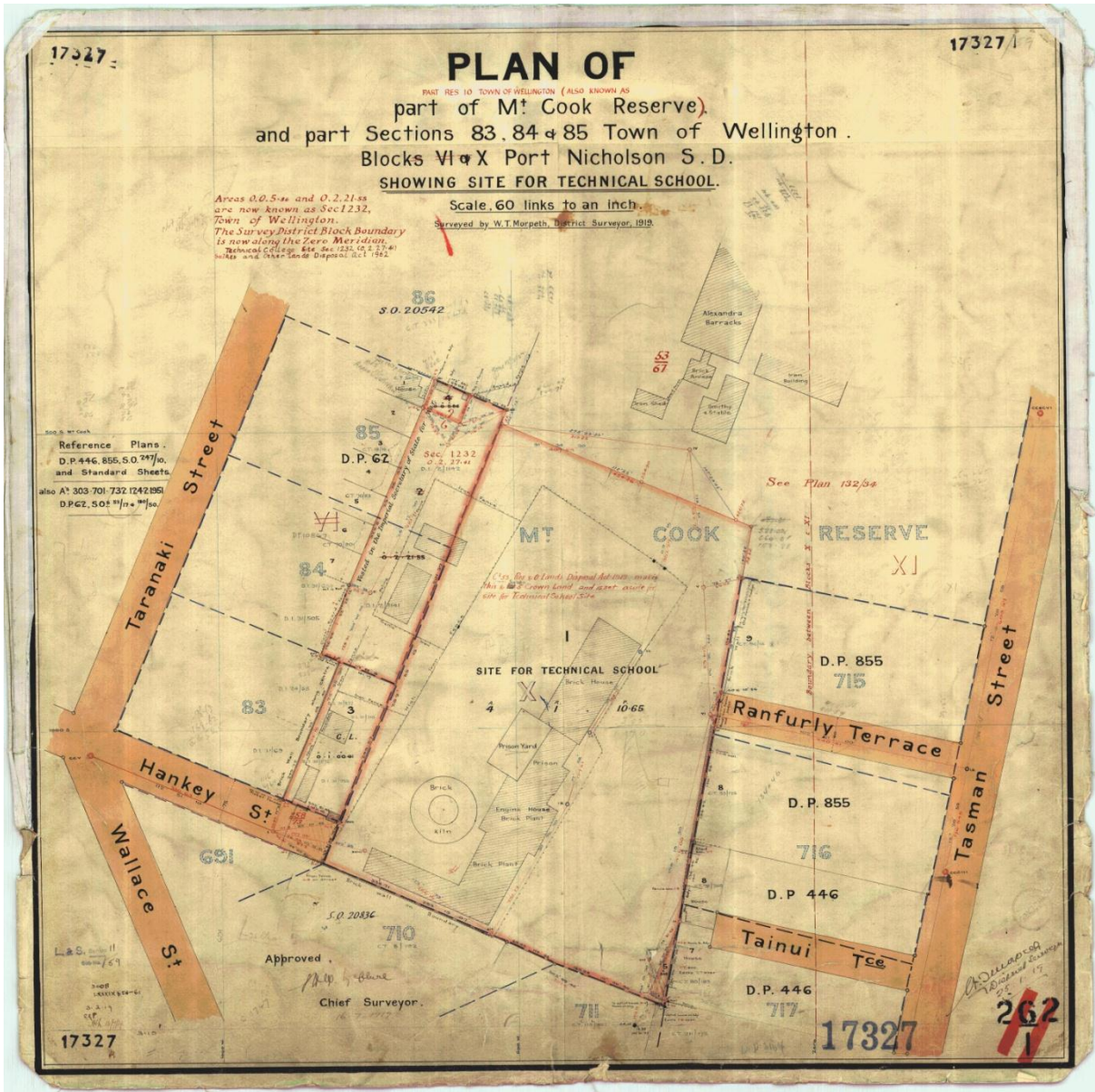


Figure 23: SO plan 17327, 1919

The northern part of Mt Cook summit was used for military and law and order purposes, and the southern part for the brickworks, as seen in Figure 24.

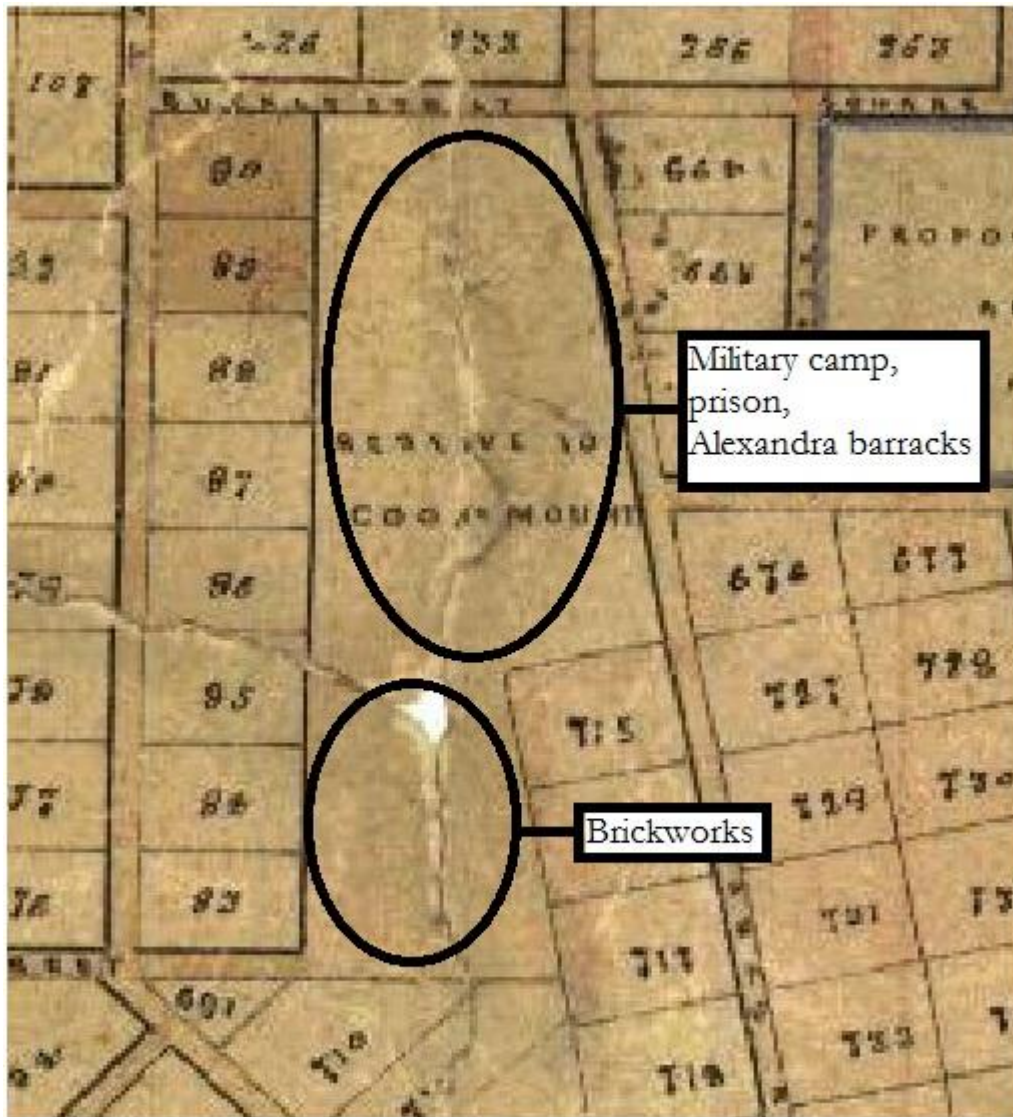


Figure 24: Spatial use of Mt Cook

Figure 25 shows detail of the brickworks structures, and shows the circular Hoffman kiln on site used to fire the bricks.

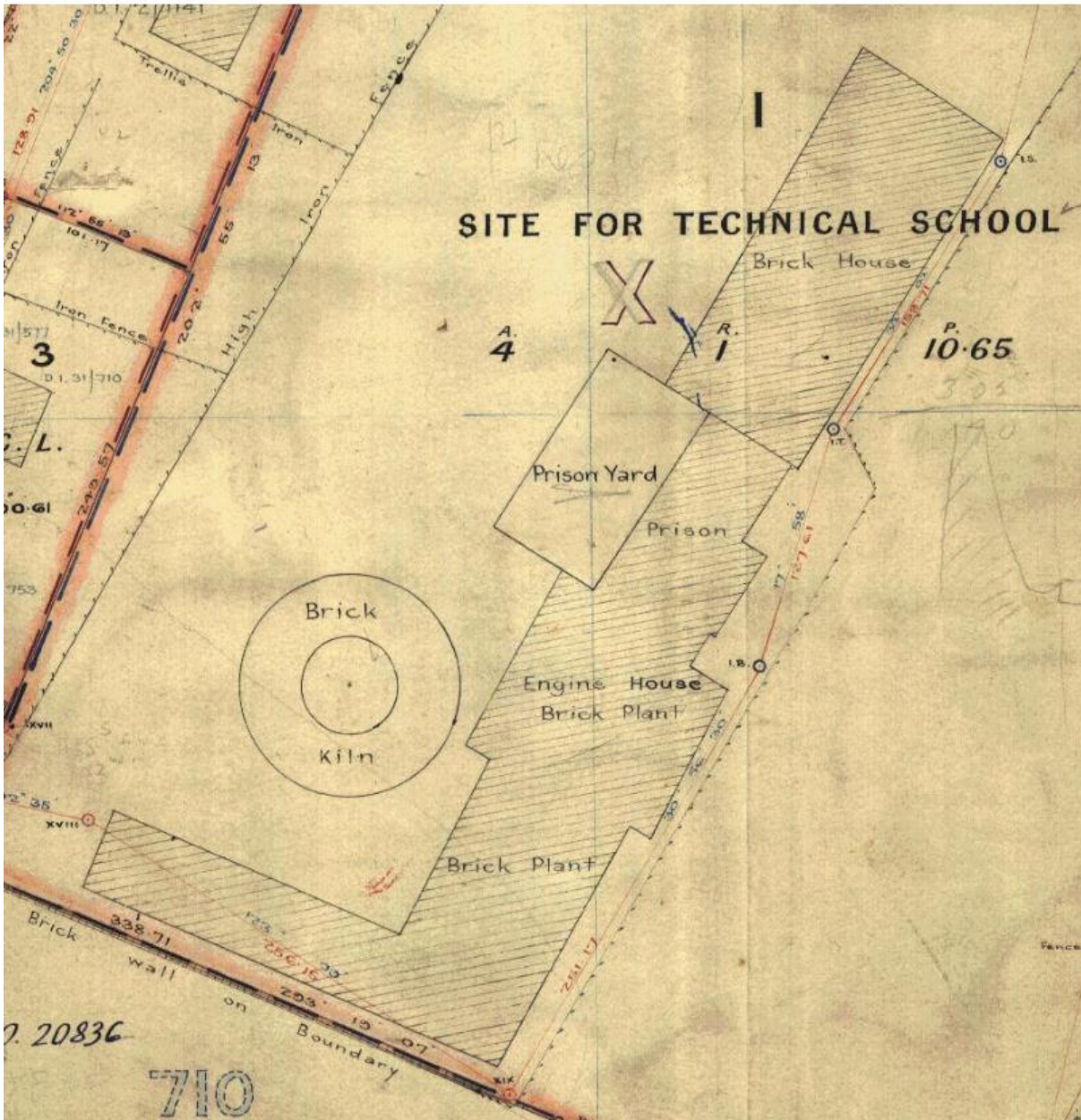


Figure 25: Detail of SO 17327

The brickworks can be seen in several images.



Figure 26: Prison brickworks south of Alexandra Barracks, between 1882 and 1931

Alexander Turnbull Library. Negatives of the waterslide and the dam behind it at Days Bay, and Mount Cook prison: 1/2-066816-G

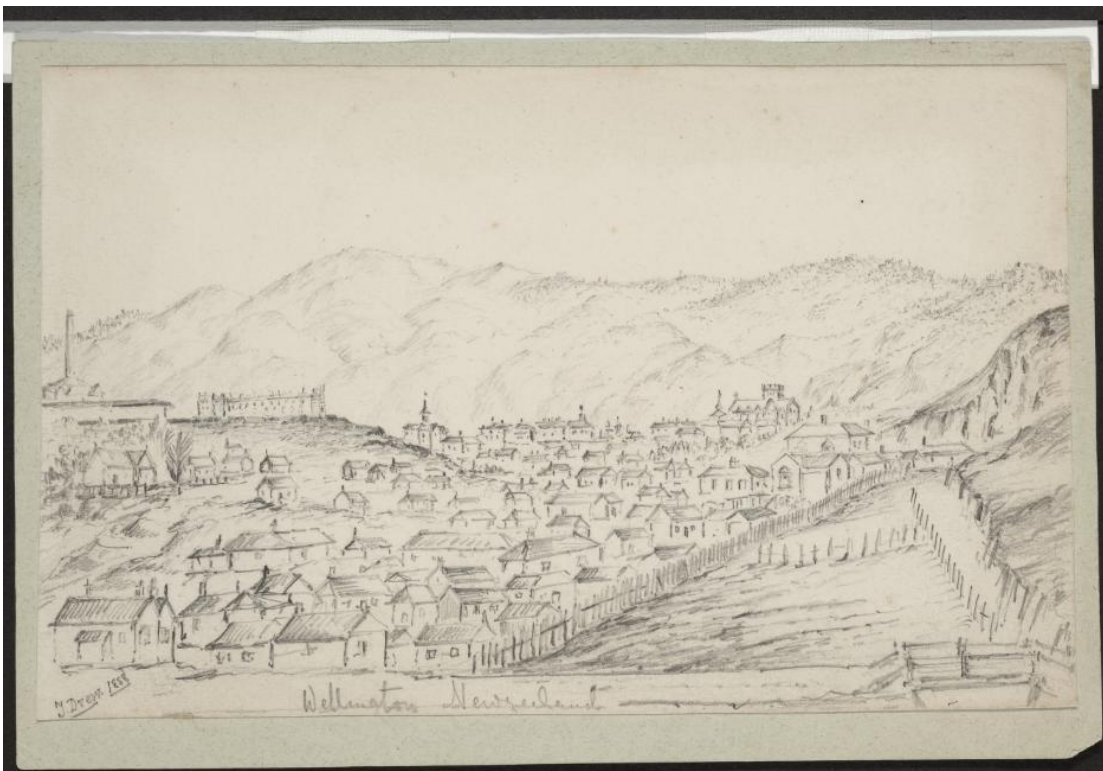


Figure 27: Alexandra Barracks, brickworks chimney on left, 1888 By: Drew, T, fl 1888

The Dominion reported in September 1919 that brickmaking at the site had ceased. The brickworks were demolished in the early 1920s for the construction of the Wellington Technical School.

“Brickmaking at Mount Cook Prison has now ceased, the stocks on hand being sufficient for the purpose of completing all existing contracts. The work of levelling and otherwise preparing the Mount Cook site for other purposes is now being proceeded with. The cutting

Dominion, 25 September 1919

Education

The Wellington Technical School was constructed on the site of the brickworks, at the south end of Mount Cook, in 1922. The school had been founded in 1891 as the Wellington College of Design³⁹. Prior to the Mt Cook site the school was located on Mercer St. It is now the Wellington High School, and shares the southern part of the Mt Cook campus with Massey University.

The original school was located in a large grand three storied building, built in 1922 and demolished in 1985⁴⁰.

³⁹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wellington_High_School_%28New_Zealand%29

⁴⁰ <http://www.whs.school.nz/about-us/history/>

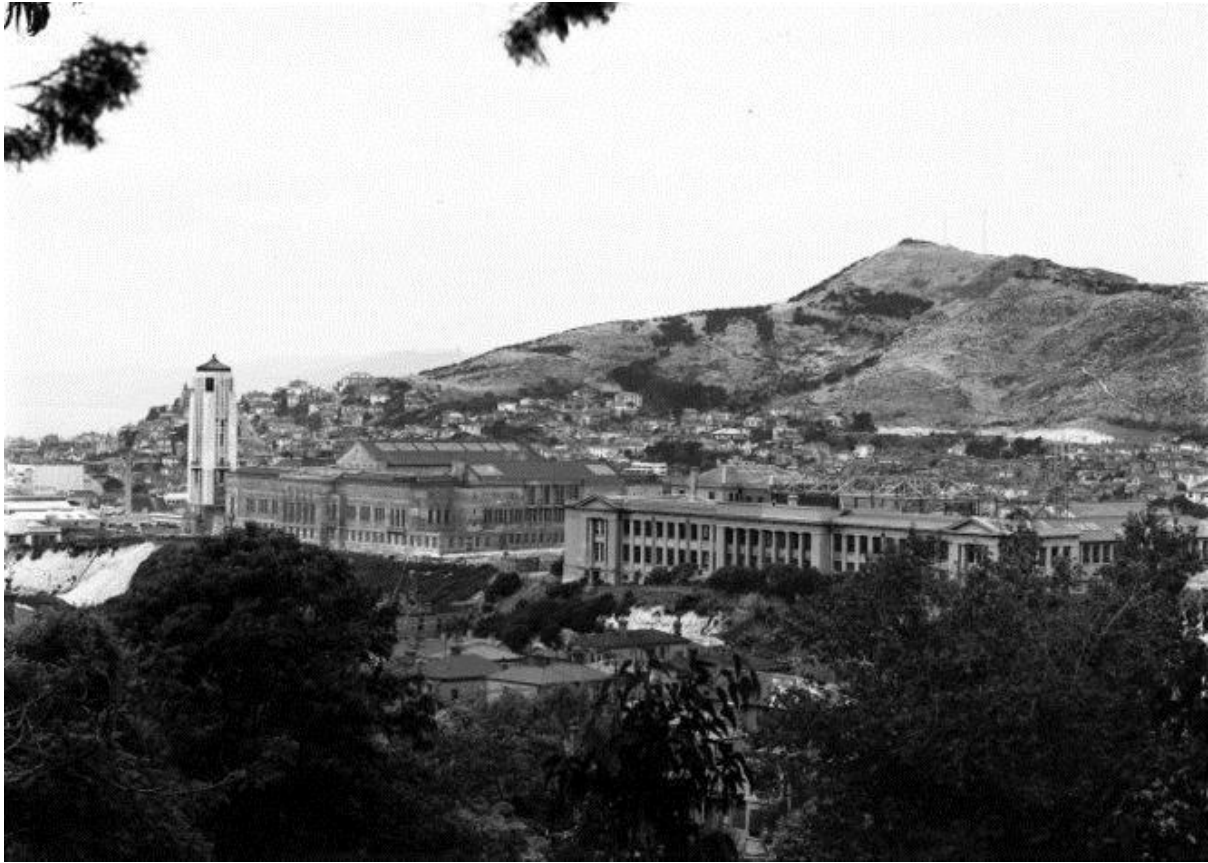


Figure 28: The Carillon, Dominion Museum and National Art Gallery, and Wellington High school, ca 1936

Photographed by: William Hall Raine

Alexander Turnbull Library. Photographic prints and negatives: Ref: 1/2-100833-G

Its focus was on applied trades and skills, as seen in this poster dated to 1895.

The Dominion Museum was built to replace the Colonial Museum, established in 1865 and sited in Museum St behind Parliament.

Construction of a new National Museum and Art Gallery, and National War Memorial was recognised as an important national public building project. Therefore a national architectural competition was held in 1929, won by Auckland architecture firm, Gummer and Ford⁴².

Demolition of the Alexandra Barracks began in 1930.

The first structure of the major project to be built was the Carillon, completed by 1932. The Dominion Museum and National Art Gallery were opened in 1936.



Figure 30: Aerial view over Mount Cook, Wellington, while the Dominion Museum was being constructed, 1933

Photographed by: William Hall Raine
Alexander Turnbull Library: 1/2-053018-F

⁴² <http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=1409>

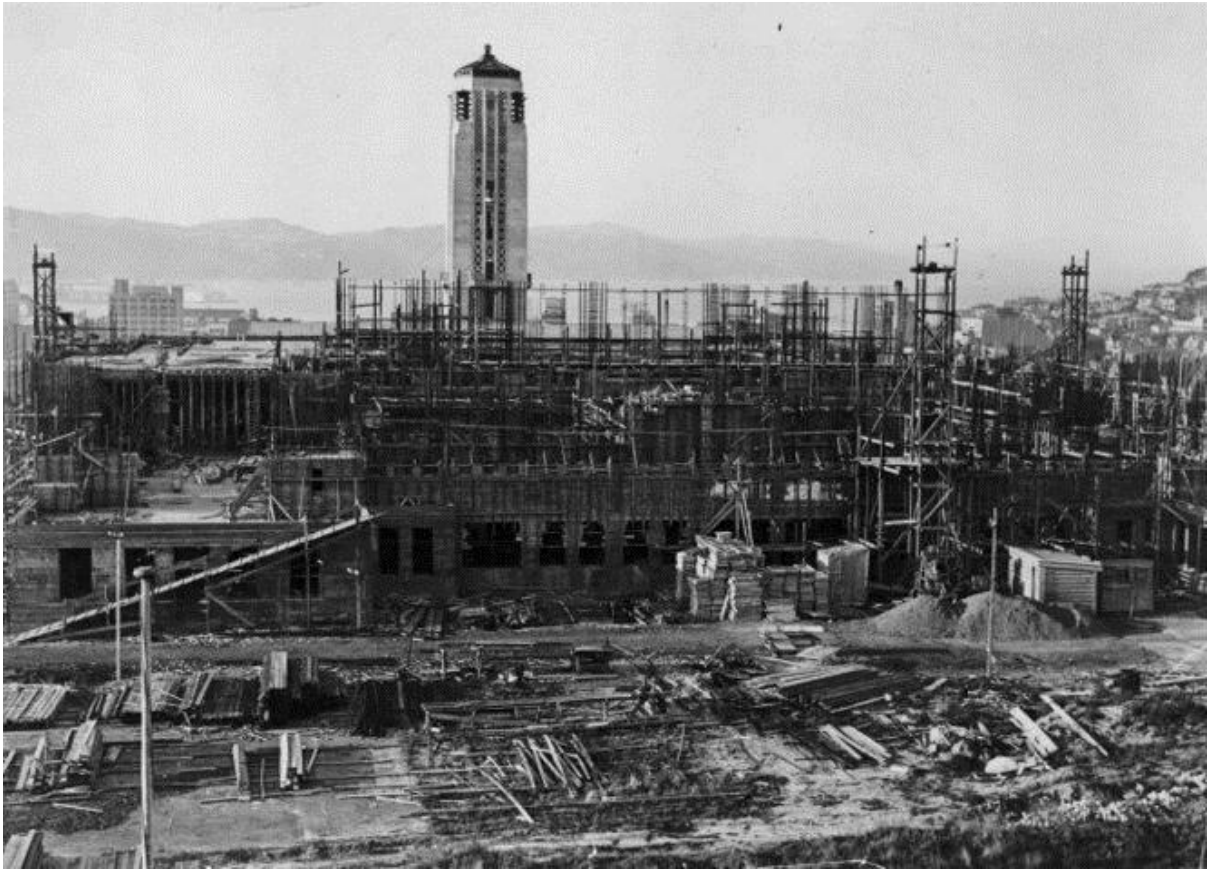


Figure 31: Dominion Museum, Mount Cook, Wellington, under construction, 1934

Alexander Turnbull Library Ref: 1/2-053016-F

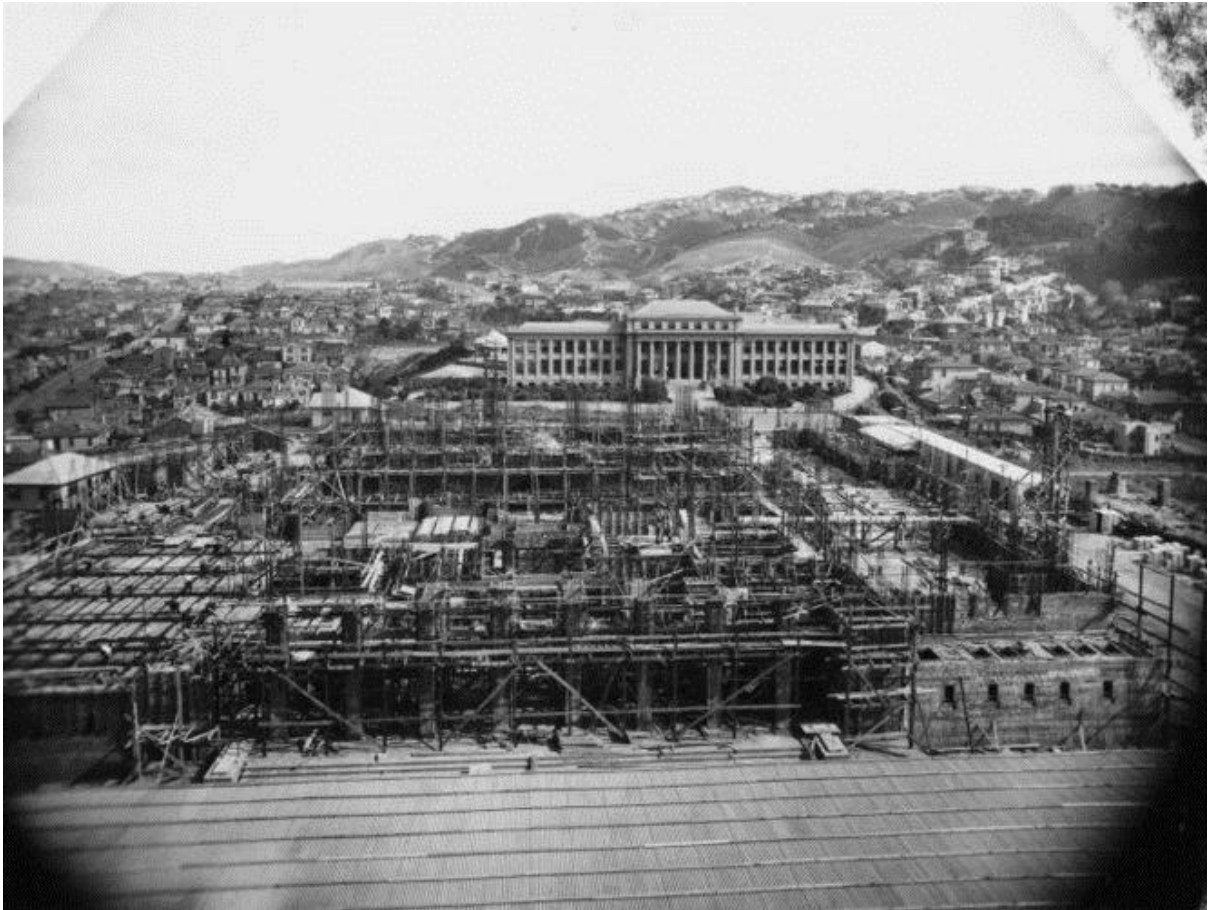


Figure 32: Dominion Museum, Wellington, under construction, 1934

Alexander Turnbull Library: 1/1-023103-G

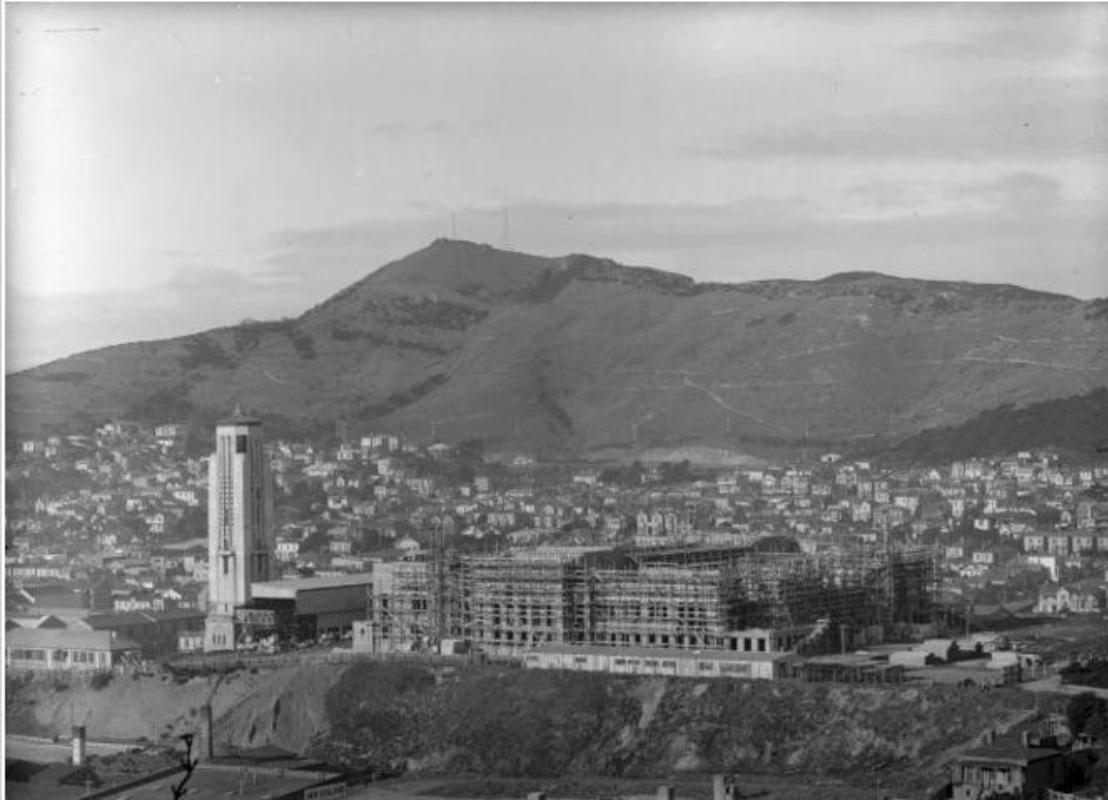


Figure 33: Overlooking the Dominion Museum, Mount Cook, Wellington, under construction, 1934

Alexander Turnbull Library. Photographs of New Zealand: 1/2-046048-G

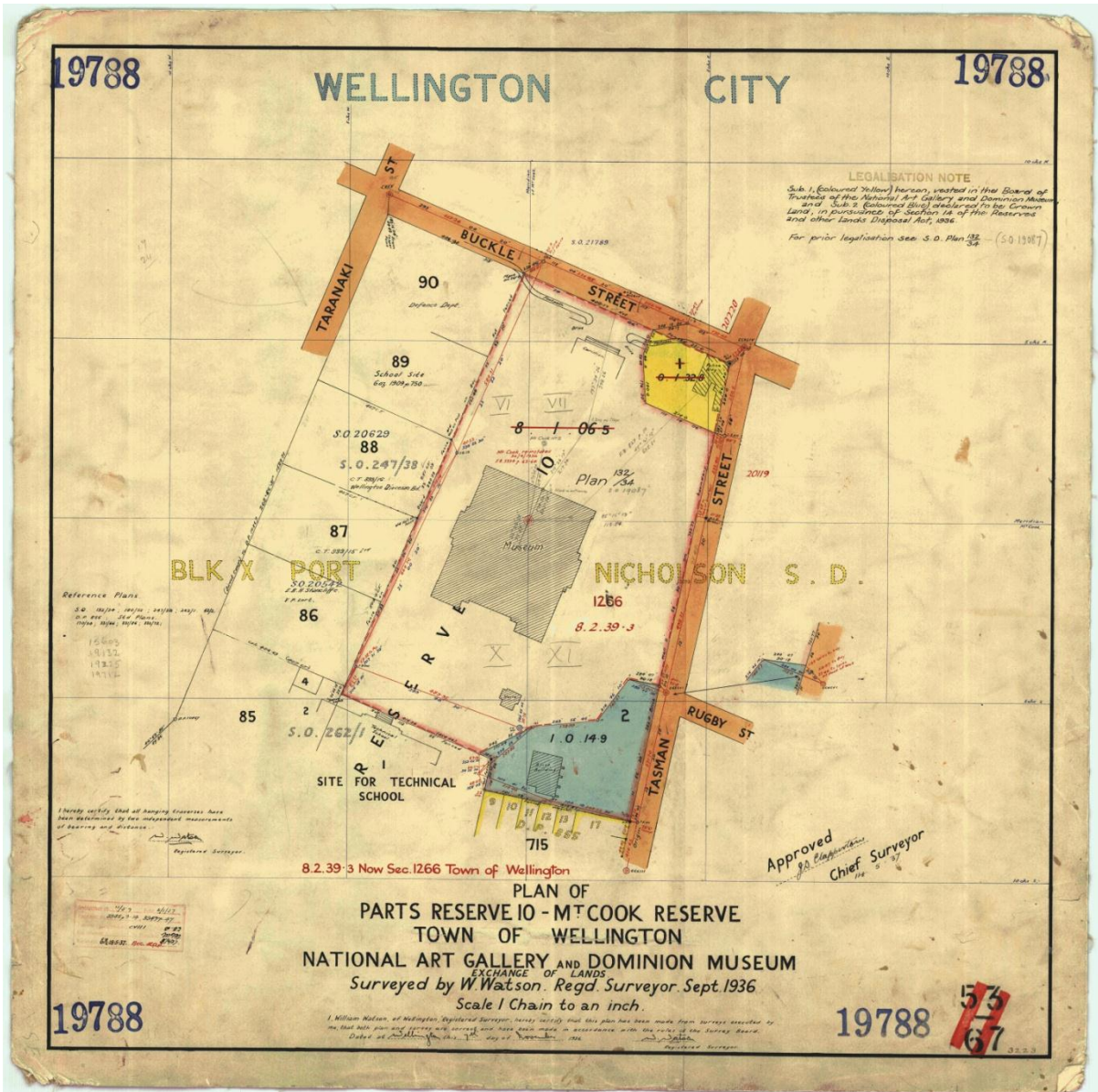


Figure 34: SO 19788, 1936



Figure 35: Looking over Wellington city, after 1936

Showing the Carillon and Dominion Museum, and Wellington Technical School
Alexander Turnbull Library. Photographs of New Zealand: 1/2-046890-G

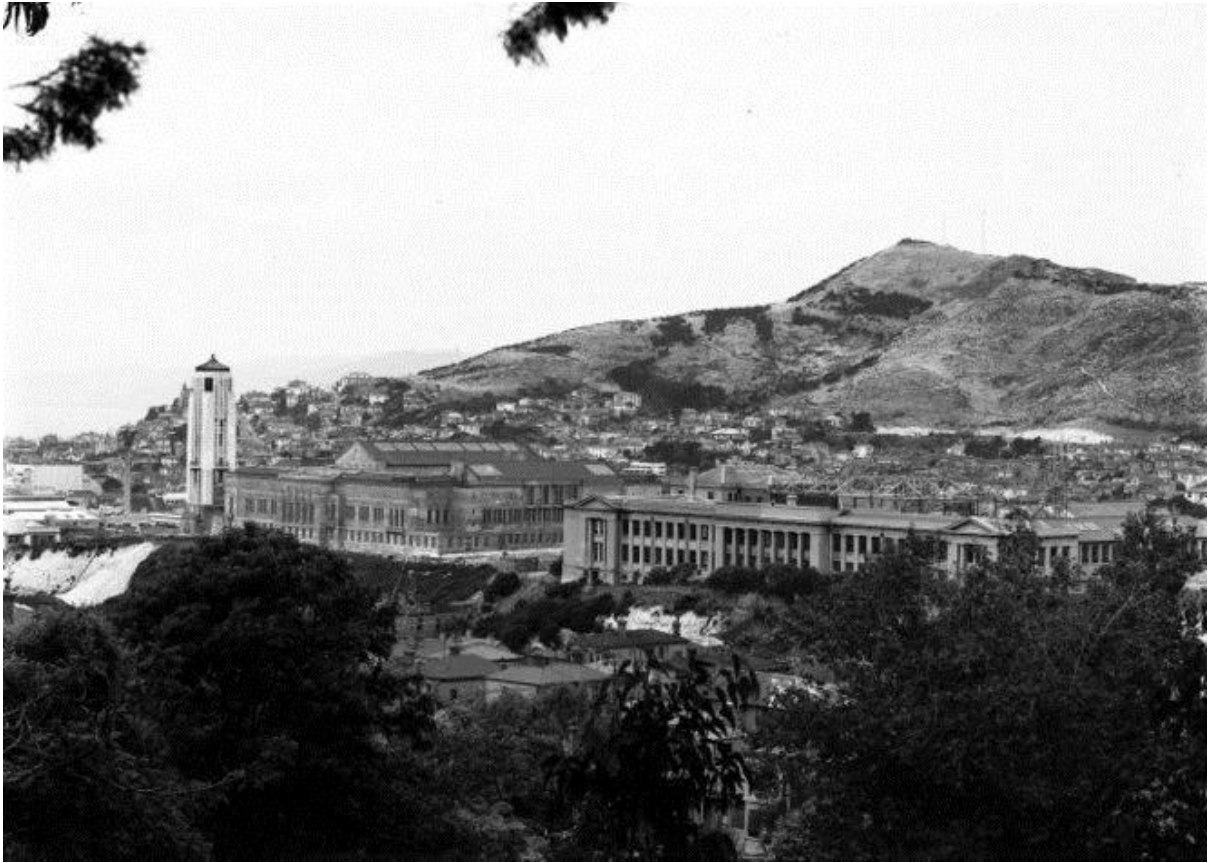


Figure 36: Looking over Wellington at Wellington High school, Carillon, Dominion Museum and National Art Gallery, ca 1936

Photographed by: William Hall Raine
Alexander Turnbull Library: 1/2-100833-G



Figure 37: Grounds being laid out in front of the Dominion Museum, Wellington, 1936

Alexander Turnbull Library. Photographic negatives and prints of the Evening Post newspaper: PAColl-6301-35

The museum and art gallery were closed to the public during World War 2, and the buildings were appropriated for defence purposes.

An 8-inch Armstrong gun formerly located in the Alexandra Barracks was deemed surplus from the military in 1920. The gun carriage was cut up for scrap but the 13 ton barrel was put up for sale but not sold. It was re-erected in front of the Alexandra Barracks on the Mt Cook hill, and, when the land was being prepared for the construction of the National Museum, was buried in situ on the hillside in front of the museum in 1930⁴³

⁴³ Cooke, 2000:97



Figure 38: Armstrong gun on Buckle Street, 1930

Alexander Turnbull Library. Negatives of the Evening Post Newspaper: 1/2-075035-F



Figure 39: Detail showing gun

A series of emergency tunnels were dug into the Mt Cook site under the National Museum in 1942 during the Second World War. They were designed to shelter Mt Cook residents and museum workers (Cooke 2001:724). There are four adits (entrances) opening onto Tasman St below and three onto Taranaki St, onto what is now the Wellington High School playing grounds. The tunnel complex remains largely intact below the former Museum building, and for a time was used as storage and conservation facilities by the Museum staff.⁴⁴

The building was taken over by Massey University in 1999.

Changing height of the hill

As noted, Mt Cook has been artificially lowered twice: first in 1848 just prior to the construction of the first wooden barracks, when it was lowered by 15 metres/45 feet, and again in 1883 for the construction of the brick Mt Cook prison/Alexandra Barracks, when the hill was lowered by about 10 metres/30 feet.

The total loss of height since the 1840s has been 25 metres/75 feet. The majority of fill from both demolition episodes appears to have been pushed north, onto the northern face of the hill descending to Buckle St.

Archaeological investigations in 2013 prior to the construction of the cut and cover tunnel for Memorial Park, which has cut through the original line of Buckle St, revealed archaeological structures from the 1880s beneath up to 4 metres of fill⁴⁵.

Images and photographs of the north face of Mt Cook taken at different times reveal the changing scale and nature of the slope.

Prior to the first excavation the hill was high and steep to the north, as seen in Figure 41.

⁴⁴ O'Keeffe, 2001: *

⁴⁵ Richard Shakles, personal communication to Mary O'Keeffe, December 2013

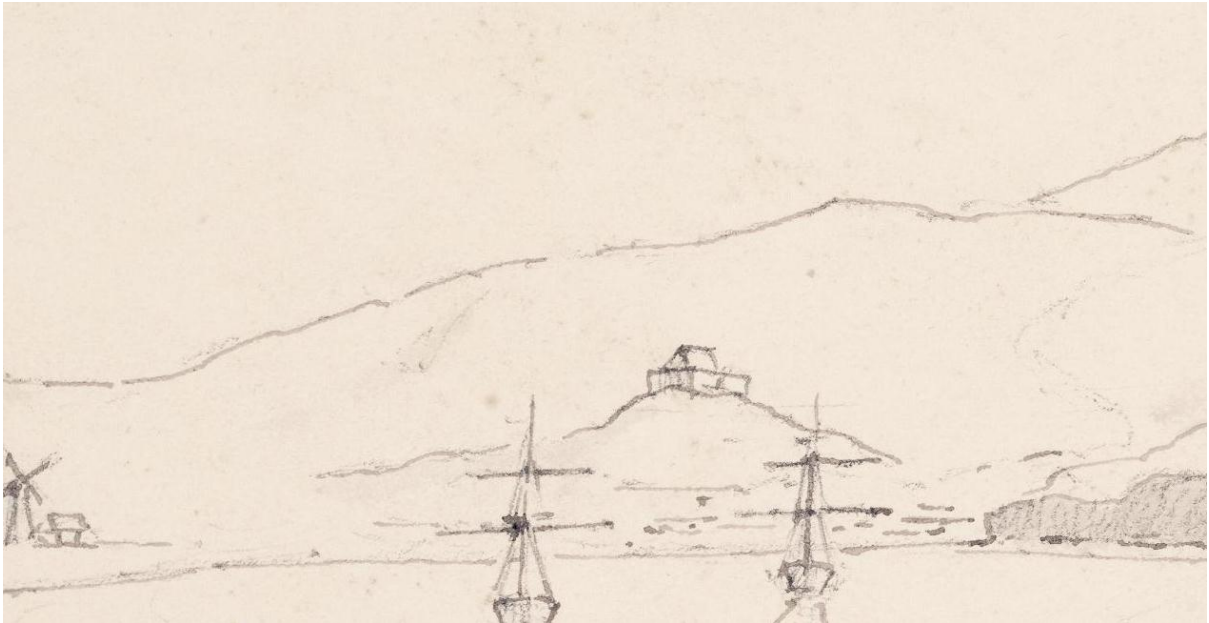


Figure 40: Detail of Crawford, Town of Wellington, 1846 or 1847

Alexander Turnbull Library: A-229-043

A broadly similar view in 1849 shows the lower hill (Figure 41).



Figure 41: Mt Cook in 1849, by T B Collinson

Alexander Turnbull Library: A-292-071

The lateral profiles of the hill can be compared in 1858 (Figure 42) and 1888 after the hill was lowered for the second time (Figure 43)



Figure 42: Mt Cook in 1858

Alexander Turnbull Library: 1/2-055704-F

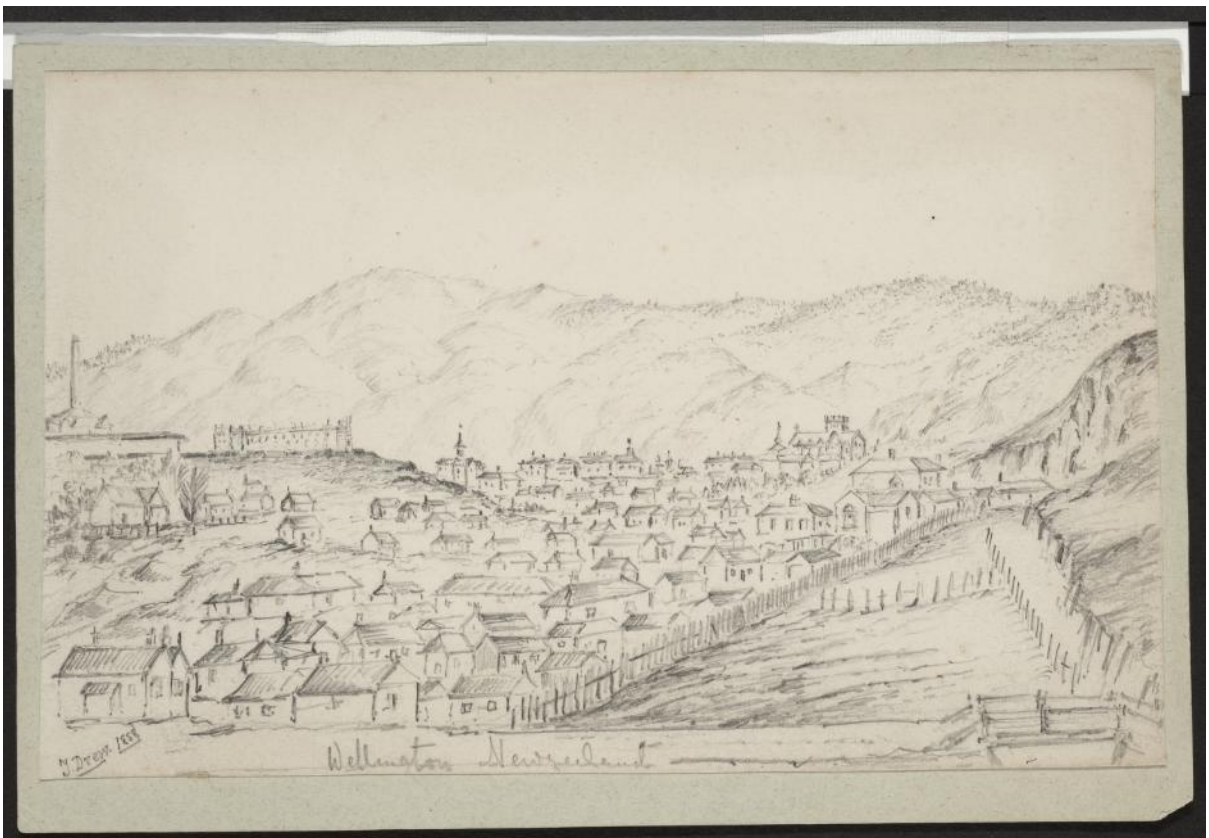


Figure 43: Alexandra Barracks, 1888

Alexander Turnbull Library: A-303-019

Mt Cook in 1913 (Figure 44) shows a broad gentle slope to Buckle St, in contrast with the somewhat steeper slopes seen in earlier images.

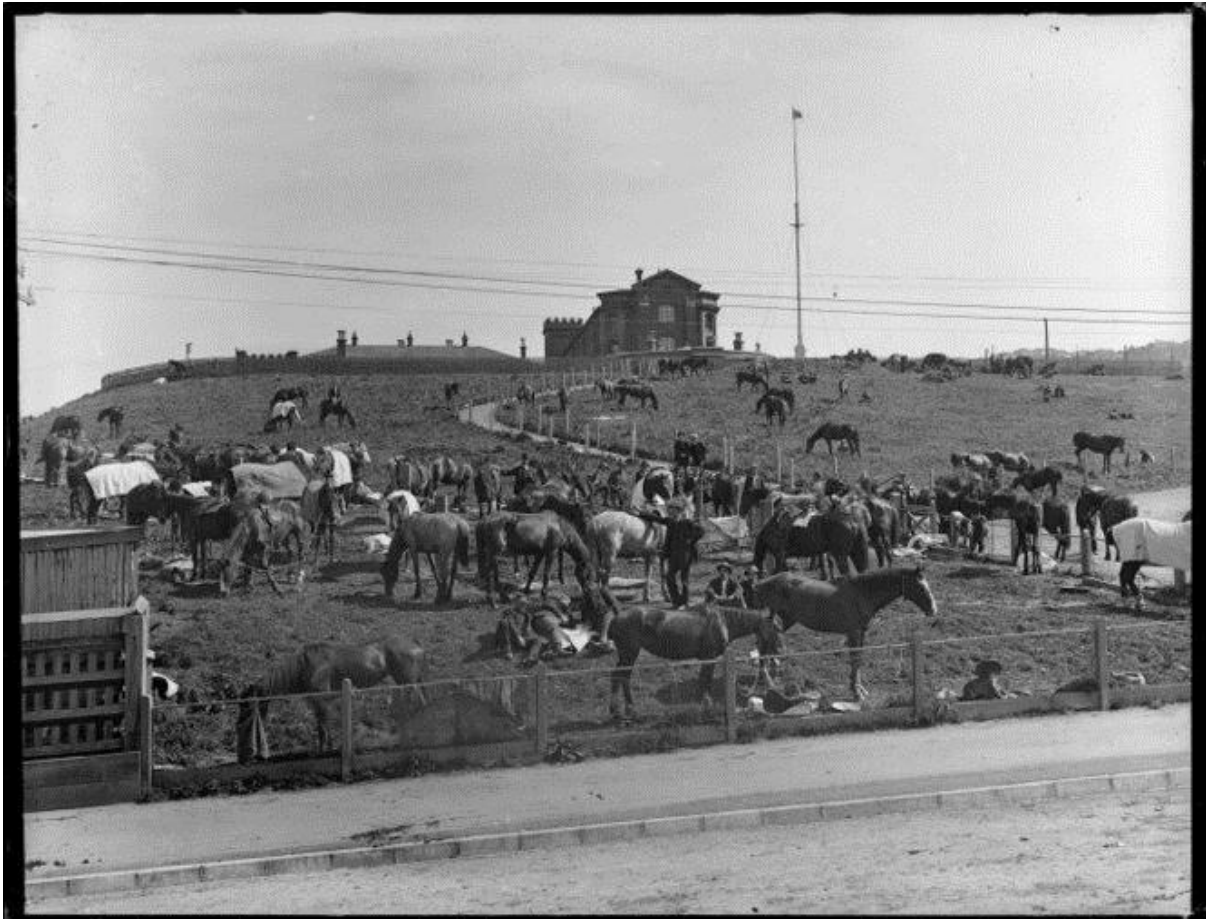


Figure 44: Mt Cook, 1913

Alexander Turnbull Library: 1/1-019679-G

Conclusions

From the time of first human occupation of Te Whanganui A Tara/Wellington, Puke Ahu has been utilised for its strategic advantage. Its height and dominating location over the city to the north meant it was an ideal location for activities of defence and law and order, with the accompanying implicit expression of imperial dominance and control.

The hill has variously been used for prisons, military garrisons, a centre of culture, and national memory. Its physical prominence has been matched by the national importance of its occupancy. It has an important place in both the history of Wellington City, and in New Zealand's military and cultural history.

Registered/Listed heritage Structures

Mount Cook Police Station (Former), corner Tasman St and Buckle St, Wellington

HPT category 2 Historic Place

HPT register number 1408

WCC listing 16/43

The building was built in 1893 and is constructed of brick. Between 1896 and 1910 it served as the New Zealand police's training centre. It is one of the country's oldest existing police station buildings. It is considered to be the last physical remnant of over 130 years of police and penal association with the Mt Cook site, beginning with the Mt Cook barracks. The distinctive arrow denoting bricks made by the prisoners from the nearby prison can be seen on many of the bricks⁴⁶.

Dominion Museum

HPT category 1 Historic Place

HPT register number 1409

WCC listing 16/41

The Dominion Museum and Art Gallery was built in 1936 to replace the previous Colonial Museum. Together with the National War Memorial and Carillon it was designed by Gummer and Ford⁴⁷.

National War Memorial and Carillon

HPT category 1 Historic Place

HPT register number 1410

WCC listing 16/40

Consisting of a Carillon constructed in 1932, and a Hall of Memories completed 32 years later, the National War Memorial is a solemn tribute to, and a commemoration of, the contribution of all those New Zealanders who have served and died in war.

Together with the Dominion Museum the War Memorial and Carillon were designed by Gummer and Ford⁴⁸.

Tasman St Wall

HPT category 2 Historic Place

HPT register number 7758

WCC listing 16/43

The wall is located on the west side of Tasman Street between 60 Tasman Street (Massey University carpark) and the former Mt Cook Police Station, corner Buckle Street and Tasman Street.

The wall is built of bricks made by prisoners working at the Mt Cook brickworks. The oldest part of the wall dates from at least 1891, and perhaps earlier. Built by prisoners who made the bricks on site at Mt Cook, the first section of wall built was at the northern end. It was extended further north to meet the Mt Cook Police Station in 1893/94 and after a period of work in 1896 the last section was built some time after 1897 and completed by 1899⁴⁹.

⁴⁶ WCC Heritage Buildings Inventory 2001

⁴⁷ <http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=1409>

⁴⁸ <http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=1410>

⁴⁹ <http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=7758>

General Headquarters Building

HPT category 2Historic Place

HPT register number 7518

WCC listing 16/424

This landmark brick building is located on the corner of Taranaki and Buckle Sts. The Mt Cook prison built from 1883 was never used for this purpose; it was appropriated by the military, including housing the headquarters of the General Officer Commanding. In 1911, artillery barracks on the corner of Taranaki and Buckle Streets were demolished to make way for what is now known as the General Headquarters Building (Former). It is probably the oldest general military administration building in Wellington. From 1929 it was the temporary home for 11 years of the General Officer commanding the army. It was designed to house the Director of Stores' offices and was probably also used as a clothing store⁵⁰. The first building on this site was built in 1882, and was a Permanent Artillery Barracks⁵¹.

Designed in the Government Architect John Campbell's offices in the Edwardian Baroque style, the building is an important representative example of early twentieth century architecture⁵².

HMNZS Olphert Building 1941

WCC listing 16/425

The HMNZS Olphert Defence Establishment is located on the corner of Taranaki Street and Buckle Street. The building was named after Captain Wybrants Olphert, DSO, DSC, RD, RNZNVR in 1951. The building is a good example of the Art Deco style⁵³.

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⁵⁰ <http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=7518>

⁵¹ WCC Heritage Buildings Inventory 2001

⁵² <http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=7518>

⁵³ <http://www.nzta.govt.nz/projects/basin-reserve/docs/basin-reserve-scoping-report-11-heritage-buildings.pdf>

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