

TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME former Johnson / McKechnie Cottage

ADDRESS 26 Wilson Street, Geraldine

PHOTOGRAPH



(Dr J Wilson, September 2018)

FORMER DISTRICT PLAN ITEM No. No. 109 **HNZ LIST No. & CATEGORY** n / a
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Pt Lot 3 and Lot 4 DP 23386

VALUATION NUMBER 2475162300 & 2475162400

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1874 +

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** Unknown (Reuben Johnson, owner/builder?)

STYLE Vernacular

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Single storey dwelling with rectangular footprint and hipped roof. Principal south-facing elevation has a central entry flanked by double-hung sash windows. Return veranda along south and west sides, with cut-out brackets atop plain timber posts with post and rail balustrading. Veranda roof formed by extension of main roof. Rear lean-to and projecting porch (north elevation). Picket fence surrounding pocket garden at the rear.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Timber framing and weatherboard cladding, corrugated metal roofing.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Shop erected on east side, necessitating partial removal of veranda (1922). Bathroom lean-to added (pre-1941). Extension of back bedroom (1965). Renovations, including reinstatement of timber veranda posts (c.2000).

SETTING

The former cottage stands on the north side of Wilson Street within the block bounded by Hislop Street to the west and Talbot Street to the east. The former dwelling is built right up to the street frontage and is bordered to the west by a driveway and to the east by a 1922 commercial building. The extent of setting is the limited to the immediate setting of the cottage, notwithstanding the potential archaeological values of the property as a whole.

HISTORY

The land on which this former cottage stands was purchased by Reuben Johnson, one of Geraldine's early settlers, in 1873. In the same year Johnson (c.1835-92) built the first Crown Hotel on Talbot Street. Johnson is believed to have built a cottage on his Wilson Street property in 1874; he held it until he was declared bankrupt in 1888. Johnson and his wife Elizabeth had no fewer than seven children. After 1888 the house passed through a number of hands; in 1922 the veranda on the east side of the cottage was removed and a connecting shop erected next door. In 1941 the cottage was bought by local journalist and Mayor of Geraldine, Douglas McKechnie. McKechnie (1909-87) was born in Christchurch and educated there and at Geraldine High School. He became a cadet reporter in 1927 and was appointed Geraldine representative for the Christchurch *Press* in 1936. McKechnie was one of the country's youngest mayors when he was elected in 1939; he was awarded a Queen's Service Order for Public Services in 1976. McKechnie lived in the cottage until his death. A TAB betting office was erected immediately to the west of the cottage in 1964, involving alterations to the west side of the cottage; this was later removed. The cottage was restored to its current state in c.2000, having been purchased by Timaru District Council in 1999.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Johnson/McKechnie cottage has historical significance as the former home of Reuben Johnson and his family and prominent local government politician Douglas McKechnie. The former dwelling also represents the colonial development of Geraldine.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Johnson/McKechnie cottage has cultural significance as a demonstration of the way of life of its early residents, as well as that of Mayor Douglas McKechnie. The former dwelling also has cultural significance for the esteem in which it is held by the community, as shown in the building's public purchase and restoration in c.2000.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The former Johnson/McKechnie cottage has architectural value as a vernacular cottage, which may have been built by its first owner. The cottage has been modified over the years, with restoration work undertaken in c.2000 responsible for its present-day appearance.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The former Johnson/McKechnie cottage has technological and craftsmanship value for its pit sawn timber construction and restored finishes.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Johnson/McKechnie cottage has contextual significance as a notable historic feature within the Geraldine town centre. The former Crown Hotel (heritage item # 102), which Reuben Johnson built in late 1873, is on the corner of Wilson and Talbot Streets, east of his 1874 cottage.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the cottage pre-dates 1900 its site has potential archaeological significance relating to the property's colonial use and development.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The former Johnson/McKechnie cottage has overall heritage significance to Geraldine and the Timaru district as a whole. The cottage has historical significance for its association with the Johnson family, the colonial development of Geraldine and Mayor Douglas McKechnie. The

former Johnson/McKechnie cottage has cultural significance as a demonstration of the way of life of its past residents and architectural value as a restored 19th century vernacular cottage. The former Johnson/McKechnie cottage has technological value for its timber construction and detailing and contextual significance as a local historic feature. As the former Johnson/McKechnie cottage pre-dates 1900 its site has potential archaeological significance relating to the development of the property.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

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REFERENCES

- *Timaru Herald* 11 May 1870, p. 3; 2 January 1874, p. 1; 30 April 1888, p. 2; 9 January 2012 & 12 March 2012 (available online).
- *Temuka Leader* 13 December 1879, p. 2; 8 September 1887, p. 3; 15 November 1887, p. 2; 24 April 1888, p. 2; 17 November 1925, p. 1.
- *Press* 10 January 1939, p. 10; 6 February 1943, p. 6; 3 September 1945, p. 4.
- *Lyttleton Times* 28 April 1874, p. 1; 28 January 1876, p. 2.
- Births, Deaths and Marriages Online.
- N Jackson 'Conservation Plan, MacKechnie's [sic] Cottage, Geraldine', Timaru District Council, 2000.



Extent of scheduling, limited to immediate setting of the building (both parcels), 26 Wilson Street, Geraldine.