

# Heritage Assessment House, 70 Barnard Street, Wadestown



View from Barnard Street, showing north elevation - photo:  
Russell Murray, June 2009

**Designers:** Atkins and Bacon  
**Date of construction:** 1914-15  
**NZHPT registration:** Not registered  
**District plan listing:** "Arts and Crafts House", Map  
15, ref. 381  
**Legal description:** Lot 5, DP 28596

Report prepared by Russell Murray, Conservation  
Architect, with assistance from Michael Kelly, Heritage  
Consultant and Kimberly Stephens, researcher

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## **Statement of significance**

The house at 70 Barnard Street has modest overall heritage value.

The house has slight historical value. The house has not been lived in by historically important people, nor has it been the scene of any significant events. However, the property is associated with locally significant architects. The house was designed by Atkins & Bacon, who were among the city's premier architects in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Stanley Fearn and Bernard Johns, who both made small but prominent changes to the house, were also architects of note in Wellington (although their contributions to this house are not positive with regard to its heritage values).

No. 70 as it stands today has modest architectural value. The original design was well considered and composed, and was a good example of the restrained Arts & Crafts style commonly employed by Atkins & Bacon at the time. However, cumulative substantial changes to its form and fabric over time detract from the architectural quality and visual appeal of that original design. The house today has a fairly cluttered and disorderly outward appearance and the jumble of additions upon additions that make up the principal elevations are very dominant in the main views of the house.

Prominently sited on the down-hill side of Barnard Street, the house has modest streetscape value. The house has high group value with other buildings in its immediate and wider contexts; it is part of a very good collection of early 20<sup>th</sup> century houses in Barnard Street and the wider Highland Park area that represent the early development of the area.

## History

Located on the northern slopes of Ahu Mairangi or Tinakori Hill, Wadestown is one of the city's oldest suburbs. Formerly known as Wade's Town, the hill top suburb was established by John Wade and fellow speculator James Watt who purchased land in the area in 1841 and subdivided it into small 1 and 2 acre lots.<sup>1</sup> A small workers' settlement was established high on the hillside in the 1840s, but it was abandoned after the 1848 earthquake.

The land to the east of this nascent community, which included parts of Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Harbour District, was acquired by the pastoralist and merchant William Barnard Rhodes. Rhodes, who became a prominent figure in the Wellington business community in the 1840s, amassed large holdings of land in both the North and South Islands during his lifetime.<sup>2</sup> His Wadestown property, which became known as the Highland Park Estate, was one of his principle freehold estates. Rhodes built a large house known as 'The Grange' on the property in the 1850s and lived there until his death on 11 February 1878.<sup>3</sup>

Upon Rhodes' death, the Highland Park Estate passed into the care of the Trustees of his estate. However, Rhodes' will stipulated that the Trustees did not have the power to sell his Wellington properties or lease them for more than two years. The Wadestown site therefore remained undeveloped in the decades that followed. The proximity of the area to the city and its suitability for residential development inevitably won out against Rhodes' wishes. In September 1901 parliament passed a private Act that granted the Trustees the power of sale over certain lands situated in the Provincial District of Wellington.<sup>4</sup> Plans for an intensive subdivision of Highland Park were subsequently drawn up by the surveyor Thomas Ward around 1908.<sup>5</sup> The first of the more than 300 lots was sold in February 1913.

On 17 July 1914 lot 130 of this new subdivision was purchased by Vaughn J B Barnsdale, an instructor for the Marine Department. The stretch of road along which this section was located was originally known as Rhodes Terrace. Within a few years of the subdivision being created, however, it had been

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<sup>1</sup> F. L. Irvine Smith. [1948]. *The Streets of my City, Wellington, New Zealand*. Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed. 1974. p. 208.

<sup>2</sup> Brad Patterson. 'Rhodes, William Barnard 1807? – 1878'. From *The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. Updated 22 June 2007. <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/> [Accessed 16/06/09]

<sup>3</sup> Oliver Arthur Gillespie. 'Rhodes Brothers'. From *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*. Edited by A. H. McLintock. [1966]. Te Ara - The Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Updated 18 September 2007. <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/1966/R/RhodesBrothers/en>

<sup>4</sup> Rhodes Trust Act 1901. Private Act 1901 No 1. [12 September 1901]. Reprinted as at 3 September 2007.

<sup>5</sup> 'Highland Park Estate: the property of the Trustees [of] Hon. W.B. Rhodes' Estate / T. Ward, surveyor'. Wellington [N.Z.]: Trustees of Hon. W.B. Rhodes' Estate. ca. 1908. Alexander Turnbull Library, Cartographic Collection

amalgamated with Barnard Street and its name changed accordingly. The house that currently stands at 70 Barnard Street was constructed for Barnsdale, to the design of the prominent Wellington architectural partnership of Atkins & Bacon, whose drawings are dated November 1914.

Alfred Atkins (1850-1919) FRIBA, a London born architect and sanitary engineer, was one of the founding partners of this firm. He studied in England before immigrating to New Zealand in 1875. Having established a reputation for himself in Wanganui in the 1880s, he was later appointed as architect to both the Education and Hospital Boards in the district as well as being employed as an advisor to the Wanganui Borough Council.<sup>6</sup> Benefiting from the building boom that began in the city in the 1890s, he undertook a number of commissions for these clients including the Ward Observatory and the old Wanganui Museum (now the Savage Club building).<sup>7</sup>

Atkins established his architectural practice with fellow London born architect Roger Bacon ARIBA in 1907.<sup>8</sup> Working together in Wellington from 1908 onwards they designed a number of public buildings mainly in Wellington and Wanganui, along with a great deal of domestic work and became an important and well-known architectural practice. The firm designed buildings at Wanganui Collegiate School, hospital buildings (including the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital for Children in Wellington, 1912), several branch buildings for the Bank of Australasia, and a number of residences in Wellington, including Atkins' own house at 4 Mairiri Road.<sup>9</sup>

In declining health, Bacon moved to Blenheim in 1918 and Atkins died in 1919. The firm continued on as Atkins and Mitchell, then Mitchell and Mitchell and later as Gooch, Mitchell and MacDiarmid.

Since its construction, the house at 70 Barnard Street has had a number of owners. The house was purchased from Barnsdale by the land agent Reginald Brownrigg on 9 February 1921. The house was then sold in July that same year to an accountant, Ernest Hodgson, who occupied the house until 1935. In August that year the registrar of the Supreme Court excised power of sale under the terms of Hodgson's mortgage and 70 Barnard Street became the property of the Norwich Union Life Insurance

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<sup>6</sup> Pettigrew, Wendy and Mark Southcombe. 'The End of the Wooden Shop: Wanganui Architecture in the 1890s'. Conference paper presented at the Centre for Building Performance Research, Victoria University, Wellington. 7th December 2007: "'Strident Effects of Instant Sophistication": New Zealand Architecture in the 1890s'.

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/cbpr/conferences/nzarch-1890s/docs/NZ%20architecture%201890s%20abstracts.pdf> [Accessed 16/06/09]

<sup>7</sup> Diana Beaglehole. 'Wanganui: Cultural Life: Architects'. Te Ara - The Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Updated 27 November 2007.

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/Places/Wanganui/Wanganui/14/en> [Accessed 16/06/09]

<http://www.teara.govt.nz/Places/Wanganui/Wanganui/14/en> [Accessed 16/06/09]

<sup>8</sup> *Wanganui Herald*. Volume XXXI. Issue 12135. 8 April 1907. p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> WCC Heritage Building Inventory 2001, Appendix III – Wellington Architects

Company. This firm appears to have rented the house out to a series of local professionals until 1939 when the property was purchased by David Walter, an industrial chemist, on 6 April.

The house changed hands once again on 5 September 1941 when it was purchased by Mary Venables. Upon Mrs Venables' death the house passed to the executors of her will, Nylla and Elma Venables, who became tenants in common in equal shares on 31 January 1944. In November 1954 the property was subdivided into two sections. While Nylla and Elma Venables retained part of the section, the land that was occupied by Barnsdale's original house was sold to John McMillan, a Shipping Company Manager. In 1960 plans for an addition to the north corner of the house were drawn up on behalf of McMillan and his wife by the architect Stanley W. Fearn, probably best known for his design of the Salvation Army's William Booth Memorial Training College, Aro Street, Wellington (1913). Alterations to the existing fabric of the building were also made at this time. A carport and small bathroom adjoining the upstairs door were designed by architect Bernard Johns in 1965.

In 1966 ownership of house and land passed to Arthur Tompkins, a judge of the Supreme Court. After Tompkins' death in September 1977 his widow, Marjorie Tompkins, took sole ownership of the house. She remained the occupant of the house until her own death in 1987. On 14 December that year the house was sold by the executors of the will to Graham Ford and his wife Clare. By November 1989, however, the house had been purchased from the Ford family by Hugh Smith and Lynda Pointon. It was during their ownership of the property that a second major addition was made to the house, this time on the north eastern façade. On 25 August 1998 the house was sold to Christopher Johnstone and Gloria Querijero purchased the house. On 20 May 1999 Querijero transferred her interest to Johnstone who remains the owner of the house.

### **History of Changes**

1914	Building constructed to Atkins & Bacon's design.
Undated	East verandah filled in.
ca. 1940s	West entry porch filled in, new external porch constructed .
ca. 1940s	Concrete tile roof replaces Marseille tiles.
1960	Kitchen extension at north-west corner of house, with hipped roof, designed by Stanley Fearn, interior alterations
1965	Carport and toilet with flat roof added on south side of house, designed by Bernard Johns, some interior alterations
ca. 1980s	Sun-room area added off west side of Fearn addition, gabled roof and bay window, designer unknown
ca. 1980s	French doors added, including to east elevation

1994	Extension off east side of Fearn addition, continuing Hipped roof, with internal gutters, and deck, extensive internal alterations to ground floor - Custance Associates (deck not built as shown), some interior alterations
Undated	Partial replacement of windows with pvc
Undated	Car-port removed

## **Description**

### ***Setting***

Wadestown is a hill suburb, with very little flat land, and the vast majority of buildings, mainly single residences, are set on sloping sites on spurs or in gullies. The houses are of many different scales and styles - the general period of construction is from the 1880s through to the 1930s; substantial houses from the 1910s, 20s and 30s are particularly prominent in the Highland Park area. The combination of verdant hillsides, steep topography and many old buildings confers a distinctive and well-established visual character to the area.

Barnard Street winds around the north end of the main spur that comes off the north end of Tinakori Hill. No. 70 is about halfway along the eastern leg of the street, nestled into the shoulder of a small spur on the harbour side of Barnard Street. The site has a distinctive large pohutukawa on the north side and opens out to the north and east to sweeping views across the harbour and beyond.

The immediate surroundings have a diverse collection of residential buildings from different eras, scattered up and down the hillsides. While the sections are generally small and the houses closely packed in plan, the nature of the topography creates ample three-dimensional space between buildings, and the overall impression of the nearby area is one of low-density housing set in bush.

### ***Building***

#### *Original design*

The house was designed in a restrained Arts & Crafts-derived style in common use by Atkins & Bacon at the time. As can also be seen on some of the firm's other surviving houses, including Atkins' own house in Mairiri Road in Kelburn, characteristic features of their interpretation of the style included a straightforward rectilinear plan form and uncomplicated elevations sheltered under a steeply-pitched tile roof with wide and low eaves, multi-light casement windows, and careful proportioning and balancing of solid and void with recessed verandahs and porches to both enliven the composition and fit the house to the site. The original drawings indicate a great deal of effort went to designing the interior of the house.

#### *Present building - Interior*

The interior was not inspected for the purposes of this report. While some original interior features, including one of the downstairs fireplaces, the stairs, and the panelled upstairs hallway are evident from the outside, the condition of the greater part of the interior is not known.

#### *Present building - exterior*

No. 70 is accessed from a long shallow driveway that arrives at the first floor level of the house on the south side, and the de-facto main entrance is the upstairs back door, which lets on to the upstairs hallway and main stair. The nominal front entrance is on the south-west side of the ground floor, sheltered behind a small porch below the level of the driveway.

The core of the house is still the original simple rectangular box clad in bevel-back weatherboards and covered with a steep-pitched gable roof, now sheathed in weathered red-stained concrete tiles. The main ridge runs east-west and there is a large single dormer window set in the centre of the north side. The roof profile is high on the south and low on the north, echoing the slope of the ground and keeping the building at a comfortable scale for its site, with the eaves fairly close to the ground at either side. The gable ends are finished in cement board and battens, giving a half-timbered appearance, and have prominent brackets to the eaves. There are two substantial chimneys in roughcast plaster. The original exterior joinery was in timber with leaded glazing; many of the windows are now modern replacement units in pvc and timber and there are many French doors.

### ***Changes***

No. 70 has been significantly altered over time to the extent that today, while it is still possible, with difficulty, to recognise the original building, its overall form is substantially changed and its outward appearance bears only a modest resemblance to the original drawings.

Each of the elevations has been changed, to a greater or lesser extent, with the most visually prominent and important elevations (north and west) being the most affected. Important parts of the external fabric have been altered too, particularly the roof - the most dominant element in the design, changed from the original Marseilles tiles to concrete tiles (undated, probably ca. 1940s or 1950s), and many of the original windows have been changed for modern pvc or timber units.

The first recorded major addition to the house was that designed by Stanley Fearn in 1960, which housed the kitchen at the north-west corner of the house under a hipped roof set perpendicular to the main roof, somewhat at odds with the form of the existing house. Other additions have been tagged on to the west and east sides of this addition, with a plethora of different shapes and roof forms concentrated in a comparatively small area; the interior has undergone concomitant change. These changes have substantially affected the appearance and function of the house, particularly at the north and west.

An undated change is the small porch at the main entry that replaced the original recessed porch space. The porch has an interesting pointed brick arch supported on distinctive columns made of round river stones cast in concrete.



The 1965 alterations for the car-port by Bernard Johns significantly changed the appearance of the south side of the house and the approach to the building.

The east elevation is the least changed of the four - the original recessed verandah has long since been filled in and the living area expanded to the outside wall line with French doors letting directly on to the small front lawn.

There is no visible evidence of the original landscaping or fences; the site shows many different styles of landscaping work and structures that have been put in place over time.

### *Effect of changes*

As the building stands today, the cumulative effect of the many extensions and alterations, particularly at the north west corner and the west face of the house, and the encroachment of the additions along the north face (as well as alterations to the south face) have largely occluded the original exterior form of the building. The original open verandah and entry porch have been filled in, and the original balance of solid and void can no longer be appreciated. Changes to the window and door locations and sizes largely detract from the original proportions and arrangement of the elevations, and changes in materials (including window joinery and roofing) also affect the visual and architectural quality of the house.

Although the interior has clearly been altered many times, some of the original finish of the house appears to survive inside and hints at its original quality.

## **Summary of heritage values**

The following summary of heritage values follows the assessment criteria used for the Wellington City Council Built Heritage Inventory (as stated in the 2001 version of the Inventory).

### *Historic value*

The house has modest historic value, and is most strongly identified with its architects, Atkins & Bacon.

### *Social value*

No particular social or cultural values have been identified.

### *Aesthetic value - architectural/streetscape/group values*

No. 70, as it stands today has modest architectural value, but is a contributor to an important group of houses representing the early development of Highland Park.

### *Scientific or technical value*

The house has modest technical value for its original materials and evidence of construction techniques of the era.

### **Recommendation for listing**

70 Barnard Street is not of sufficient merit to list on the Wellington City Council District Plan, and consideration could be given to removing it from the Heritage Inventory.

It is further recommended that consideration be given to an audit of heritage buildings throughout the Highland Park area. There are many interesting old houses in this area that represent the early development and established character of the area, including a number by other prominent Wellington architects. Many of these houses are likely to meet the criteria for District Plan listing.

### **Images**

All photos - Russell Murray, June 2009



View from north-east, additions prominent at the right of the picture



Part of south elevation - bathroom addition prominent in the foreground



West side - porch addition, kitchen/sun-room extension,  
replacement windows etc.



North side - original dormer window and chimney, replacement window joinery.

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