

Te Peeti Te Awe Awe Memorial

The Square, Palmerston North

NZHPT Registration Number: 1272
NZHPT Registration Type: Historic Place – Category II
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City/District Council: Palmerston North City Council
District Plan Status: Category 1



Brief History

This monument to Rangitāne chief, Te Peeti Te Awe Awe, was unveiled at a civic event on the 29th of January 1907 by Native (Maori Affairs) Minister, Sir James Carroll who, with Hone Heke MHR, was welcomed by the Rangitāne people.

Te Peeti's brother, Hare Rakena Te Awe Awe (Harry Larkins) performed the haka pōwhiri. Three of the flags flown for the ceremony had been presented to Te Peeti by the New Zealand Government for his services in the Taranaki wars. One was Tānenuiarangi, presented in 1868, which is still preserved today as a taonga by the Te Awe Awe family.

Te Peeti Te Awe Awe was born about 1820 and spent much of his early life at Puketotara near the present village of Rangiotu. His marae was known as Kikiwhenua and was situated on the site now occupied by the Awapuni racecourse. After the death of his father in 1863 he allied his people to the Government, determined to regain land lost in intertribal wars. In about 1878 he was a convener of a meeting of representatives of the Rangitāne and the surrounding Wanganui, Ngatiapa and Ngāti Kauwhata tribes who selected a Maori name for the Square, Te Marae o Hine, 'The Courtyard of the Daughter of Peace'. Te Peeti Te Awe Awe died at Awapuni in 1884 and was buried at Puketotara. His younger sister Ereni Te Awe Awe commissioned the monument in 1905 and the cost of £1,000 was raised by the Rangitāne people.

The Carara marble monument with lead-filled lettering set upon a concrete plinth was designed by Palmerston North artist Harold Anderson, and is principally in the Neo-Gothic style with Classical elements such as festoons. The figure was based on photographs supplied by the Te Awe Awe family. Local monumental mason Samuel Dowdall, who carved the Coronation Memorial (1905) was also employed on the project. It is thought that Dowdall created only the pedestal and that an Italian sculptor was commissioned to fashion the monument. On the pedestal are the leader's dying words, Kua kaupapa i au te aroha, ma koutou e whakaoti (I have laid the foundation of friendship for you to bring to completion).

The Council agreed to place the statue in a prominent position in the Square Gardens, on the site once occupied by the Papaioea pa, an ancient Rangitāne stronghold. The statue faces east in the direction of the Gorge through which the Rangitāne originally travelled to take possession of the lands of Manawatu. It is of great historical value as it provides a memorial to a notable Rangitāne leader who was a very significant figure in the relations between Māori and Pākehā in the early history of Palmerston North. The statue itself is regarded as unique in other respects. It is the only statue commemorating an historic person in the Manawatu. An expert from the Dominion Museum once termed the statue priceless, as there are believed to be only three other similar marble statues in New Zealand. One of these, the statue of Keepa Te Rangihwinui (Major Kemp), a cousin of Te Peeti, stands in Moutoa Gardens, Wanganui.

Principal Sources:

Ian Matheson City Archives A175/72/3.

Charles Matenga, Personal communication.

Palmerston North City Library Photograph Collection Sq 9, 19, 46, 238, 255, 258, 310, 342, 366, 368;Mo21, 30.