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Forgotten Cornerstone: A History of Coleman Place in Palmerston North From the Late Nineteenth Century to the Early Twenty-First Century

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

New Zealand histories have typically referred to the idea of place in passing, with scholarly examinations featuring and interrogating place less frequently. This thesis examines the development of Coleman Place, a place within Palmerston North's city centre (adjacent to The Square), that has received little attention within the wider history of its surroundings. Originally government reserve land, Coleman Place emerged organically as a thoroughfare and developed into a commercial space between several streets, part of the developing regional centre in the late nineteenth century. Its name became attached to an early figure in Palmerston North, Sylvester Coleman, who it can be argued was typical of European settlers during this period who came to New Zealand in order to improve their economic and social standing. Despite Coleman's contributions to Palmerston North in public and private capacities, his historic memory faded quickly after his death in 1881 while Coleman Place developed into a mixed space of commercial and public use. While public use of the space disappeared shortly into the twentieth century, with Coleman Place solidifying into a place of commercial and retail use, the space was also significant in serving for a time as a gathering place in town. Later in the century, Coleman Place became the focus of placemaking within two redevelopments. The first, in 1973, took the form of a pedestrian mall after groups and individuals discussed how it could balance its commercial use while fitting into modernisation of the wider city. Redevelopment was undertaken by the Palmerston North City Council with the expectation to further develop the area, however conditions and priorities did not result in significant changes until 1996 when the city's main library shifted nearby. Though part of a wider project to create a cultural precinct on The Square's north western area, this second redevelopment inadvertently reconnected Coleman Place with elements of its past, despite being unrecognisable from its original state. In its present form, having reopened with through traffic from The Square to George Street, it has retained its commercial and retail usage while becoming again linked to public use, housing the library's Youth Space and becoming used again as a gathering place for various events. Overall, this thesis' focus on a specific history of Coleman Place offers insights into how places, specifically urban developments, more broadly may be understood. Additionally, it also adds to the historical knowledge of Palmerston North.

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Introduction

The notion of ‘place’ is everywhere in history. Place, as a typical definition invokes, “is a meaningful site that combines location, locale, and the sense of place.”¹ Yet place, as this catch-all definition proclaims, holds more than meets the eye to what created, maintains, and exists within it. Place can be further understood when introducing the geographic concept of ‘space,’ where the transformation from ‘space’ to ‘place’ can be understood in that “space becomes a place when it is used and lived.”² This thesis focuses on one particular place, Coleman Place, which is also known as Coleman Mall, within the city of Palmerston North, with its origins, developments, and relationship to the city examined over time.

Place in New Zealand History

In New Zealand history, popular discourse has typically focused on the place of our nation and its long-standing characteristics. Although place is inescapable from histories spanning pre-human settlement, to those that describe the history of people and events in Aotearoa me Te Waipounamu,³ New Zealand, the concept being employed or ignored in different ways, along with different methodologies, has led to a breadth of histories with their varied perspectives.

In Māori history, the idea of place has been held as essential to oral and later written histories before the arrival of Pākehā (non-Māori). This is evident throughout various tribes’ histories, particularly apparent with Treaty of Waitangi Tribunal claims attempting to compensate for Māori displacement of land, through deprivation of sovereignty.⁴

¹ Tim Cresswell, “Place,” In *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, Vol. 8, Eds. Nigel Thrift and Rob Kitchen (Elsevier, Oxford, 2009), 169.

² Ibid, 170.

³ Although Aotearoa is now the common reference in the Māori language to identify all of New Zealand, historically it only referred to the North Island. Te Waipounamu, the Waters of Greenstone, has been recognised as the South Island’s Māori name, particularly by its largest Iwi, Ngāi Tahu. The combination of both names into one respects each place as belonging together, in a larger sense, while recognising their clear geographic and historic differences.

⁴ Peter Meihana and Hone Morris, “Tangata Whenua,” In *City at the Centre: A History of Palmerston North*, Eds. Margaret Tennant, Geoff Watson, and Kerry Taylor (Auckland: Massey University Press, 2020), 54-55.

In the broader picture, general histories that describe the country and its themes, such as Michael King's *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Keith Sinclair's *A History of New Zealand*, or the second edition of *The Oxford History of New Zealand* by various contributors, are histories typically where everyday places of New Zealanders are inferred as being 'there' without giving much attention to what these spaces were.⁵ These 'ordinary' places, seemingly on the periphery in these grand histories, are nonetheless places of significance to the forces that influenced them and to those who created the histories that are now looked back upon. The actors behind the grand political movements and decisions in New Zealand's past first had homes, lived spaces, where many national decisions, though important, often had a lesser importance on someone's life than to what was occurring in their immediate setting. Broad histories, like the economic history of Brian Easton's *Not in Narrow Seas: The Economic History of Aotearoa New Zealand*, have outlined an economic and political history concerned with both New Zealand's national story and how it fits into the international setting.⁶ However, they often do so without considering place and individual people outside of a larger history.

Even where place is discussed in general New Zealand histories, it is often short. James Belich's first volume of his national history, *Making Peoples*, spent little time examining these lived places in-depth within the nineteenth century colonial era of New Zealand's history, other than to reveal the progress, trends, and ideas that were a reflection of people's relationship and usage of their lived places.⁷ Although Belich reflected in this a long-standing feature of 'place' within the psyche of the country, not dwelling on specifics for long, he did so to highlight that many New Zealand colonial settlements appeared often as quickly as they declined.⁸ Later, in his second volume, *Paradise Reforged*, this refrain is repeated again to highlight a pattern of 'progressive colonialism' that forged many short-lived communities and places until the 1880's, when New Zealand was "a size in which countrywide communities of interest could be imagined."⁹ Though trying to measure the country by large standards, Belich did eventually devote some time to discussing the place of

⁵ Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Viking Ed. (Auckland: Penguin Group New Zealand, 2004); Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, 4th Ed., (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1991); Geoffrey W. Rice, Ed., *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd Ed., (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992).

⁶ Brian Easton, *Not in Narrow Seas: The Economic History of Aotearoa New Zealand* (Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington Press, 2020).

⁷ James Belich, *Making Peoples: From Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (London: Allen Lane; Auckland: Penguin Press, 1996).

⁸ Ibid, 8.

⁹ James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders From the 1880s to the Year 2000* (Auckland: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, 2001), 17-20.

New Zealand's eventual dominant city, Auckland, demonstrating that general histories cannot entirely avoid specific discussions of place.¹⁰

This argument that Belich made, that communities, and places as an extension, did not largely emerge until after the 1880's, is reflected chiefly in Miles Fairburn's *The Ideal Society and its Enemies*.¹¹ Arguing that because New Zealand's early society was highly 'atomised' due to a variety of factors, like geographical and economic explanations, Fairburn posited that places had little overall significance or meaningful chances to develop because socially "the means of association at the local level were so thin, and such a large proportion of individuals had little or nothing to do with them."¹² While it is inarguable that New Zealand's population was more isolated and transient in the nation's early history, Fairburn's discounting of how individual places and their histories developed during this era downplays the importance of place within how these small or short lived places contribute to a larger context.¹³ As reflected in a *New Zealand Journal of History* article by David Hamer entitled "Towns in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand", places, specifically rural communities, are seen to have developed or stagnated due to their relative importance and performance to other locations during this era.¹⁴ Places in early New Zealand history then should not be sidelined as any developments for the eventual growth or decline of towns, and their services, necessarily mean that rich histories of places could be found anywhere, especially where some places have distinguished themselves against other places, regardless of perceived importance.¹⁵

Within this discussion, colonial New Zealand was and is still considered in popular discourse to have been largely rural-centric in its make-up, economically and socially, though this assumption ignores the breadth of places where the land had been 'tamed' by the twentieth century. Ben Schrader's *The Big Smoke* brings this idea to the forefront when he highlighted a lack of urban focus in New Zealand history, arguing that this is strange because "since the early twentieth century most New Zealanders have lived in towns and cities – 86 per cent were urban in 2014."¹⁶ Referring to a statistic cited by Lionel Frost's *The New Urban Frontier*, New Zealand was among the fastest new world settler colonies to have a majority

¹⁰ Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 525-527.

¹¹ Miles Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and Its Enemies: The Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society 1850-1900* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1989).

¹² *Ibid*, 187.

¹³ *Ibid*, 177.

¹⁴ David A. Hamer, "Towns in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand," *New Zealand Journal of History* 13(1) (1979), 5.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 8.

¹⁶ Ben Schrader, *The Big Smoke: New Zealand Cities 1840-1920* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2016), 15.

urban dwelling population for a society considered to be married to the land.¹⁷ Between 1874 and 1911, New Zealand's urban population climbed from 28.3% to 48.6%, representing a sustained shift away from the average life being lived in rural locations to the burgeoning towns and cities rising from bush commerce.¹⁸ Where some historians have overlooked urban settings as not being particularly relevant for dedicated histories, Schrader's observation, and invitation, is that all manner of urban settings have histories that, if not significant on their own, could tell us more about larger things too.

Local historians have typically had the mantle of place histories, both urban and rural, across the regions of New Zealand through various eras, sometimes with greater freedom and specificity than of professional historians. Jim Gardner's *Where They Lived* demonstrated, with its examination of local, regional, and social histories within New Zealand, that there has been some uncoordinated effort by professional historians to investigate and consider where and how lives were lived.¹⁹ This 'unorganised' description has foils, perhaps most prominently in the efforts of Erik Olssen and others in the Caversham Project, which has placed the history of the Dunedin suburb within a variety of contexts and detail obtained from broad data.²⁰ Olssen's deconstruction of South Dunedin's history has led to many works such as *An Accidental Utopia?*, the fourth in a series produced from the Caversham Project, which specifically examines social mobility in the suburb's history.²¹ Later, Olssen produced *Working Lives c.1900, A Photographic Essay* detailing with pictures the lives and history of the changing urbanised landscape of Dunedin, demonstrating how the 'Old World's' industrialisation and peoples created what was once New Zealand's economic centre.²² In another contribution, Olssen contributed to several chapters in *Sites of Gender: Women, Men and Modernity in South Dunedin, 1890-1939*, which discusses gender and history in the industrial suburb.²³

Scholarly interest in place is not just restricted to what are considered major urban centres either. Tony Ballantyne's *New Zealand Journal of History* article regarding the town of Gore

¹⁷ Schrader, *The Big Smoke*, 405.

¹⁸ Lionel Frost, *The New Urban Frontier: Urbanisation and City Building in Australasia and The American West* (Kensington, N.S.W: New South Wales University Press, 1991), 38.

¹⁹ W. J. Gardner, *Where They Lived: Studies in Local, Regional and Social History* (Christchurch: Regional Press, 1999), v-vi.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 60.

²¹ Erik Olssen, Clyde Griffen, and Frank Jones, *An Accidental Utopia? Social Mobility and the Foundations of an Egalitarian Society, 1880-1940* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2011), 11.

²² Erik Olssen, *Working Lives c.1900, A Photographic Essay* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2014), 6-9.

²³ Barbara Brookes, Annabel Cooper, and Robin Law, Eds., *Sites of Gender: Women, Men and Modernity in South Dunedin, 1890-1939* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003).

is a good example.²⁴ Though seen as a small centre today in comparison to others, Ballantyne's research of the Southland town revealed that given its population growth by 1905 and its "extensive range of industries and businesses... as well as a substantial number of public facilities and institutions," Gore was viewed by some at that time as a progressive place.²⁵ Its rich history as a microcosm of an urban centre and a space where the workings of community were practised and tested, though not proclaimed as representative of all New Zealand urban spaces, demonstrate, as Ballantyne argued, that more local history is needed to understand what makes up New Zealand.²⁶

There are other examples too of using place to approach histories. H. C. D. Somerset's *Littledene: Patterns of Change*, an earlier social study, took an in-depth look at the Canterbury town of Oxford particularly during the 1930's.²⁷ While Somerset had lived in the community during his life, he described *Littledene* as an historic time capsule of the place's history, which can be perceived as emblematic of the places and lived experiences of New Zealanders during this period.²⁸ Works, like P.J. Gibbons' *Astride the River: A History of Hamilton*, have demonstrated that many urban locations have and are continuing to receive sporadic attention as professional or local interest adds to the understanding of history in New Zealand.²⁹ Rollo Arnold's *Settler Kaponga 1881-1914* similarly detailed this in his examination of the Taranaki settlement over three decades, contrasting this length of time to his earlier works to frame Kaponga as "a frontier fragment of the Western World."³⁰ By doing so, Arnold added another perspective to understanding places in New Zealand's past where an "old world" informed how the residents lived,³¹ somewhat ironically given the forces that shaped their new world location. In a broader example, *Heartlands*, edited by Kynan Gentry and Gavin McLean, sought to provide understanding and knowledge about New Zealand places by publishing a collection of chapters, by different authors, proposing that what we understand about place "often says more about us *now*... than it does about the

²⁴ Tony Ballantyne, "Thinking Local: Knowledge, Sociability and Community in Gore's Intellectual Life, 1875-1914," *New Zealand Journal of History* 44(2) (2010), 138-156.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 140.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 138-139, 151-152.

²⁷ H. D. C. Somerset, *Littledene: Patterns of Change*, Enlarged Ed., (Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1974).

²⁸ *Ibid*, 3-4.

²⁹ P. J. Gibbons, *Astride the River: A History of Hamilton* (Christchurch: Whitcoulls Limited for the Hamilton City Council, 1977), 16-21.

³⁰ Rollo Arnold, *Settler Kaponga 1881-1914: A Frontier Fragment of the Western World* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1997), 11.

³¹ *Ibid*, 11-12.

past.”³² One of these contributors, Katie Pickles, echoed this notion later 2016 *Christchurch Ruptures*, an examination of the history of Christchurch after the Canterbury region’s 2010-2011 earthquakes.³³ Having highlighted different features of places and their making, Pickles’ work on Christchurch reflects and reveals how major events disrupt and can shape notions of what constitutes places, their historic memory, and their futures.³⁴

General resources too, such as websites like *Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, and *New Zealand History*, offer the public short informative articles on many aspects of New Zealand’s settlements from professional sources. However, while giving some consideration to the notion of place, do not do so to great detail. Rather, regions are broken down into major localities as places themselves.³⁵

More recently, a new history curriculum, developed for the teaching of New Zealand’s histories in schools for Years 1 to 10, has emphasised that a range of topics, which encompass place, are important to understanding and encouraging students to think critically about the world.³⁶ Place, though not explicitly stressed, is implicit in the idea of developing understanding of the four big ideas the curriculum seeks to engage with: Māori history as the foundational history of New Zealand, colonialism and its impacts, how power has shaped people and their environments, and how connections to others have shaped the country and its people.³⁷

To ignore or forgo places then, particularly those which are urban, within New Zealand and wider histories is to ignore many of the important forces, stories, and times which explain how the urban spaces look and function the way they do today.

³² Kynan Gentry and Gavin McLean, Eds., *Heartlands: New Zealand Histories Write About Where History Happened* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2006), 7-25.

³³ Katie Pickles, *Christchurch Ruptures* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 2016).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6-13.

³⁵ New Zealand History: Nga korero a ipurangi o Aotearoa, “Palmerston North,” <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/keyword/palmerston-north> (Accessed 31 July 2023); Malcolm McKinnon, “Manawatū and Horowhenua Places,” *Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/manawatu-and-horowhenua-places> (Accessed 31 July 2023).

³⁶ Ministry of Education, *Aotearoa New Zealand’s Histories in the New Zealand Curriculum*, (Wellington: Government of New Zealand, 2023), 1. Document can be accessed via: [https://aotearoanzhistories-live-storage3bucket-ventvwpos5jk.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2022-03/CO2951 MOE Aotearoa NZ Histories A4 online.pdf?VersionId=PqbgImEPyKt4f_wj1eSFpqv6.OKn1dq](https://aotearoanzhistories-live-storage3bucket-ventvwpos5jk.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2022-03/CO2951%20MOE%20Aotearoa%20NZ%20Histories%20A4%20online.pdf?VersionId=PqbgImEPyKt4f_wj1eSFpqv6.OKn1dq)

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

Histories of Palmerston North

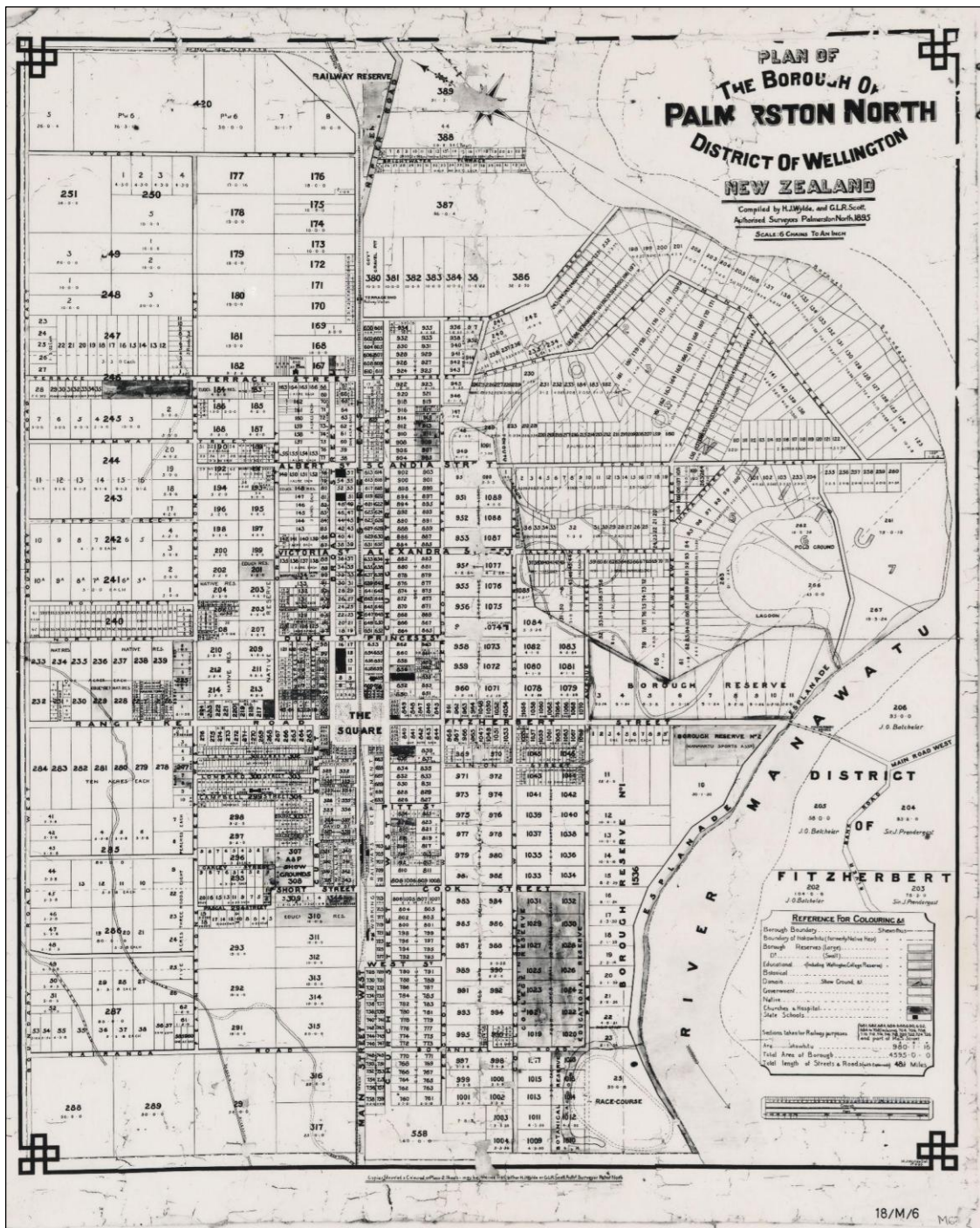


Image 1: A survey of Palmerston North, 1895, mapping out the then Borough’s growth, with key names, boundaries and features of locations within the centre identified.³⁸

³⁸ H. J. Wylde, Civil Engineer, Authorised and Licensed Surveyor, Palmerston North, “Plan of the Borough of Palmerston North District of Wellington, 1895,” 1895. Manawātū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/b4bbc5b7-a555-49a6-992c-1c2a6c40710b> (Accessed December 1, 2022).

Focusing within this thesis' place, the place of Palmerston North has enjoyed an array of local histories, not unfamiliar to other urban centres around New Zealand. Perhaps the most well-known of them, George C. Petersen's *Palmerston North: A Centennial History*, has provided a good overall history of the city to 1971, building on the efforts of past historians and writers of the town's history.³⁹ Petersen previously wrote another history, *The Pioneering Days of Palmerston North*, in which he credited T. Lindsay Buick's *Old Manawatu* as the "only major historical work dealing with the Upper Manawatu and Palmerston North" up until 1903.⁴⁰ Before Petersen, Robert H. Billens and H. Leslie Verry's *From Swamp to City*, a self-described 'official souvenir' celebrating the city's diamond jubilee, gave an overview of Palmerston North's history, with roughly half of it being afforded to the city's business and industrial history.⁴¹ Most histories of Palmerston North have evoked the 'pioneering' period, romanticising the early years of European settlement. This is evident in the titles and subtitles of works such as: Buick's *Old Manawatu: or The Wild Days of the West*, A. G. S. Bradfield's *Forgotten Days*, Charlotte E. Warburton's *Changing Days and Changing Ways*, A. E. R. Joblin's *Behold the Plains*, amongst others mentioned by Petersen, all demonstrative of a rich social history existing in Palmerston North beyond any one history.⁴²

Since the 1980's, there has been a continuous production of locality-focused histories concerning the city in several forms and for a variety of interests. Garry O'Neill's suburb-focused volumes, *Terrace End* (2009), *Hokowhitu* (2012), and *The West End of Palmerston North* (2018), provide detailed examinations into these specific suburbs while chronicling the changes, events, and memories these spaces have had in their part of the city.⁴³ Brian Mather's street histories of *Russell Street* (2006), *Cuba Street* (2007), *Taonui, Lombard, and Campbell Streets* (2008), and *Rangitikei Street* (2011, with contributions from Garry O'Neill), presented in a series of lectures to the Palmerston North Historical Society (which have since been published into notes), are some examples of smaller sized histories of

³⁹ George C. Petersen, *Palmerston North: A Centennial History* (Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed Ltd, 1973).

⁴⁰ George C. Petersen, *The Pioneering Days of Palmerston North* (Levin: n.p., 1952), 6; T. Lindsay Buick, *Old Manawatu: or the Wild Days of the West* (Palmerston North: Buick and Young Printers, 1903).

⁴¹ Robert H. Billens and H Leslie Verry, *From Swamp to City* (Palmerston North: K. & B. Print, 1937).

⁴² Petersen, *Centennial History*, 1-2; Buick, *Old Manawatu*; A. G. S. Bradfield, *Forgotten Days* (Levin: Kerslake, Billens, and Humphrey Ltd., 1956); Charlotte Eliot Warburton, *Changing Days and Changing Ways: Collections and Recollections of Palmerston North and the Manawatu District* (Palmerston North: C.E. Warburton, 1954); Dorothea Joblin, *Behold The Plains* (Auckland: Longman Paul Ltd., 1970).

⁴³ Garry O'Neill, *Terrace End: The Story of Palmerston North's First Suburb* (Palmerston North: Palmerston North Historical Society Inc., 2009); Garry O'Neill, *Hokowhitu: The Story of Settlement and Development* (Palmerston North: Palmerston North Historical Society Inc., 2012); Garry O'Neill, *The West End of Palmerston North: Awapuni, Riverdale, Manawatu o Rangitane* (Palmerston North: Garry O'Neill, 2018).

Palmerston North's streets and their various changes over time.⁴⁴ Jim Lundy's *Nine Thousand Bricks A Day* (2005), thoroughly examining all things brick-related in Palmerston North, tells the history of the Hoffman Kiln, now a protected historical building partially due to its own significance for the city and wider New Zealand industrial history.⁴⁵

For wider history of Palmerston North, the most recent and comprehensive work, *City at the Centre: A History of Palmerston North* (2020), examined the locality through different scholar's expertise.⁴⁶ While primarily concerned with the development of Palmerston North through various chapters, it not only focused on the place of the city but also places it in context of the wider region and nation. Prior to this, city archivist Ian Matheson's *Council and Community: 125 Years of Local Government in Palmerston North 1877-2002* gave the public an accessibly comprehensive overview of city history and its public workings.⁴⁷ It is worth noting that Petersen, amongst others, acknowledged Matheson's invaluable contributions as the city archivist in many capacities, with Petersen outright stating this in his centennial history.⁴⁸

Within newspapers there have been numerous articles throughout the years regarding Palmerston North and the surrounding area's history. Specifically, between 2004 and 2021, journalist and historian Tina White wrote the *Memory Lane* weekly column about histories of the area in the *Manawatū Standard* (previously known as the *Manawatu Standard* and later as the *Manawatu Evening Standard*).⁴⁹ This has since been replaced by the *Back Issues* column, a collective of historians and people in the heritage sector more broadly writing about similar subjects, showing a continuing interest by both the newspaper and readers alike in learning and promoting knowledge about the place, and people, of Palmerston North. Compilations of articles celebrating historic milestones have periodically been produced over time as well. Specifically: *The Birth of Palmerston North*, a 1971 *Manawatu Evening Standard* celebration

⁴⁴ Brian Mather, *Russell Street* (Palmerston North: Palmerston North Historical Society Inc., 2006); Brian Mather, *Cuba Street* (Palmerston North: Palmerston North Historical Society Inc., 2007); Brian Mather, *Taonui, Lombard, and Campbell Streets* (Palmerston North: Palmerston North Historical Society Inc., 2008); Brian Mather and Garry O'Neill, *Rangitikei Street* (Palmerston North: Palmerston North Historical Society Inc., 2011).

⁴⁵ Jim Lundy, *Nine Thousand Bricks A Day: The Hoffman Kiln and The Brickworks of Palmerston North* (Palmerston North: New Zealand Historic Places Trust Manawatu Branch, 2005), 91.

⁴⁶ Margaret Tennant, Geoff Watson, and Kerry Taylor, Eds., *City at the Centre: A History of Palmerston North* (Auckland: Massey University Press, 2020).

⁴⁷ Ian Matheson, *Council and Community: 125 Years of Local Government in Palmerston North 1877-2002* (Palmerston North: Palmerston North City Library, 2003).

⁴⁸ Petersen, *Centennial History*, 2.

⁴⁹ *Manawatū Standard*, "Memory Lane writer Tina White recognised for her contribution," July 29, 2018; *Manawatū Standard*, "End of the stroll down Memory Lane for Manawatū historian Tina White," July 31, 2021. For the sake of consistency, this periodical will be referred to as the *Manawatū Standard* in this thesis (where it is not otherwise identified as having published a book or owns an image under a different spelling).

of the city's centenary (compiled by Ian Matheson);⁵⁰ *Palmerston North Centennial 1970-71* by *The Tribune*,⁵¹ and later, *Our Place, Our People: Palmerston North, 1877-2002* produced by the *Manawatu Standard* (which also featured a timeline infographic), which celebrated the city's quasiquicentennial (125th anniversary).⁵² Academically, the yearly publication of the *Manawātū Journal of History*, beginning in 2005, contributes to the on-going producing of histories about all sorts of topics regarding Palmerston North and its wider area in a more critical fashion.

Palmerston North has also served as a backdrop in previous theses and research exercises. However, it has typically featured for use within studies of national and international trends and patterns – not usually just focusing on it as a place of specific study in its own right. Philip Fleming's 1980 research exercise, "Radio Broadcasting in Palmerston North 1924-1937," while providing a unique snapshot into a lens of local history, did so in the context of examining a broader national subject for that short period.⁵³ Alaric Bragg's 2004 research exercise regarding "The Savage Crescent State Housing Precinct," though focused on a significant place within the city's history, evaluated it within the greater political and social context of the first Labour Government's housing policy.⁵⁴ A thesis by Pauline Knuckey in 2012, "A Global Province? Movie Culture in a Small Provincial City 1919-1945," examined the place and contexts of cinemas in early twentieth century Palmerston North, with a stated comparison to foreign places.⁵⁵ The clearest outlier is former Mayor Jill White's 2007 thesis, "An Uneasy Relationship: Palmerston North City and the Manawatu River 1941-2006," which although focused on a natural feature that for many years was on the periphery of the city, affords valuable insights into the development of the locality.⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Ian Matheson, *The Birth of Palmerston North* (Palmerston North: *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 1971).

⁵¹ *Palmerston North Centennial 1970-71* (Palmerston North: *The Tribune*, 1970).

⁵² Lisa Kruger, Ed., *Our Place, Our People: Palmerston North 1877-2002* (Palmerston North: *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 2002).

⁵³ Philip Fleming, "Radio Broadcasting in Palmerston North 1924-1937," Bachelor of Arts with Honours Research Exercise, Massey University, 1980.

⁵⁴ Alaric Bragg, "The Modern Suburb: The Savage Crescent State Housing Precinct, Palmerston North," Bachelor of Arts with Honours Research Exercise, Massey University, 2004, 60.

⁵⁵ Pauline Knuckey, "A Global Province? Movie Culture in a Small Provincial City 1919-1945," Master of Arts Thesis, Massey University, 2012, 9.

⁵⁶ Jill White, "An Uneasy Relationship: Palmerston North City and the Manawatu River, 1941-2006," Master of Arts Thesis, Massey University, 2007.

Coleman Place, Coleman Mall, and The Square

Place histories then, as outlined in general and for Palmerston North, are nothing new. For Coleman Place, the subject of this thesis, there has been a lack of comprehensive writing about its development and changes to it over time as part of the inner-city, as well as little commemoration and connection to its historic memory noted. This is despite historians and others identifying several significant facts about it within the city's history, even with details of its historic buildings being documented in several heritage catalogues.⁵⁷



Image 2: Plaque on the former Union Bank of Australia building, on the corner of The Square and Coleman Place, commemorating the survey of Palmerston North.⁵⁸

Though Coleman Place has been noted as being on the corner of where Palmerston North was first surveyed, which was commemorated by a plaque laid by the Palmerston North Centennial Association in 1971 (seen on the adjoining former Union Bank of Australia building, Image 1), this fact went unacknowledged from the rest of the centennial celebrations.⁵⁹ Subsequent anniversary milestones, and even ones before this, do not

⁵⁷ Palmerston North City Council Archives, A175/19, "Palmerston North CBD Heritage Inventory," Ian Bowman and Michael Kelly, 1993; Palmerston North City Council Archives, A175/19/2, "Proposed North West Square Heritage Area and Buildings for Individual Listing," Ian Bowman and Val Burr, 2010; *Palmerston North City Council*, "Built Heritage Inventory: PNCC District Plan and HNZPT Listed Built Heritage 2020."

⁵⁸ Isaac Heaphy, "First Survey Centenary Plaque," August 12, 2021.

⁵⁹ Palmerston North Centennial Association, "Centenary of Palmerston North 1871-1971 Souvenir Pack," 1971. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/2f2ceb79-db6d-409c-88b7-daa3a8647f00?child=d7cbdecd-0fa7-4862-baa2-6a9dafac056b> (Accessed 2 August, 2023). This folder shows an emblem of the Palmerston North Centennial Association that corresponds to the symbol shown on the plaque.

particularly acknowledge Coleman Place in any significant way, with other parts of the city receiving more attention and signage, such as the information boards recently installed at Memorial Park or at various parts of the Manawatū riverside walkway. Despite its name acknowledging its historical link to an early Borough councillor, Sylvester Coleman, nothing communicates this fact to those who visit the area.



Image 3: View from George Street into Coleman Place and beyond (into The Square and Broad Street), circa 1925.⁶⁰

This is perhaps unsurprising given that Coleman Place has been linked primarily to commercial or retail activities for most of its existence. Added to this, its unique street configuration, which has been a feature throughout its existence as an inner city thoroughfare, has been absorbed as part of the area’s identity belonging to a cultural precinct. Currently, the street is one of the few one-way streets in Palmerston North, with a more pedestrianised streetscape giving rise to its branding as ‘Coleman Mall’ on its street signs. Knowledge about

⁶⁰ Photographer Unknown, “Coleman Place looking north towards The Square and Broad Street,” c. 1925. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/ddee596b-3280-4cbb-b98b-565777b164cb> (Accessed July 12, 2023). This photograph was also used on the cover of Robert Bradshaw’s *Palmerston North and Surrounds: A Century in Photographs* (Palmerston North: Robert Bradshaw, 1999).

its development outside of this, although known in the context of the Council’s long-standing relationship to Coleman Place, has generally received little attention outside of its two redevelopments in the 1970’s and 1990’s respectively.

Despite over a century of development, Coleman Place has sometimes only been observed as a thoroughfare from the inner city to beyond the north western corner of The Square, especially more recently to the adjoining George Street and nearby Cuba Street as part of the aforementioned cultural precinct. While this is true to the extent it has served as a thoroughfare, this underplays the significance it has, and continues to have, for Palmerston North as a unique space within its utilisation for public and private uses.

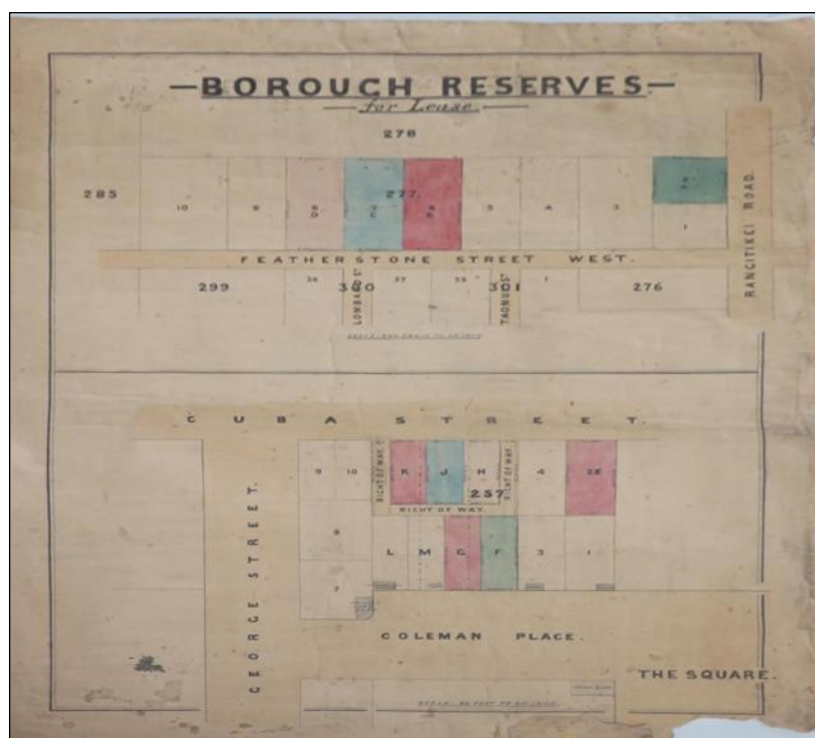


Image 4: Plan showing Borough Reserves for lease in Coleman Place and other locations in Palmerston North, thought to have been created circa 1893.⁶¹

In mentioning The Square, Palmerston North’s city centre, it is worth noting that a significant portion of what is the nearby dominant space, having become synonymous with the place and history of Palmerston North, has not received a specific comprehensive history of being a place either in its own right. While this thesis considered comparing Coleman Place with its surroundings, like The Square, and other places similar to it in Palmerston North and New Zealand, given that the main focus in research was on understanding the development of

⁶¹ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 7/6/16:1:1, “Borough Reserves Subdivision and lease.”

Coleman Place and various changes within it over time, these discussions are outside the scope of this thesis.

Thus, this thesis aims to answer several questions regarding Coleman Place, while detailing a more comprehensive history of it in pursuing a greater understanding of it as a place within Palmerston North. Firstly, how and why did Coleman Place come into existence? Secondly, what is known about the person whom it was named after and what was his greater significance to Palmerston North and beyond? Thirdly, what does the development of Coleman Place communicate about the nature of it as a place in its own right?

Source Material Discussion

For this thesis, attention has been given to examining the available materials pertaining to Coleman Place. Thus, there has been reliance on materials held primarily in three places for primary sources.

First, from the Ian Matheson City Archives, housed in the Palmerston North City Library. The archives contain a range of materials, most of them primary sources, that have proven invaluable to this research into Coleman Place. Although a significant portion of documents are regarding the Council's discussions and plans for Coleman Place, a collection of materials outside of this, some specifically compiled by former archivist Ian Matheson, proved useful in complementing the Council's records regarding the area. With Council records encompassing an array of subjects over 150 years of record keeping, index records were consulted to help narrow discussions and mentions of Coleman Place. Because Coleman Place featured more frequently in the Palmerston North City Council's records towards the latter half of the twentieth century, there is more discussion and planning documents regarding it for reasons explained in chapter three. The second resource, Papers Past, was useful to examine early newspaper articles about Coleman Place within the centre's early history. This was particularly true for the biographical section on Sylvester Coleman in chapter one, especially to test the veracity of a research document found in the Ian Matheson City Archives produced by a distant relative of Coleman's wife. For a few later newspaper sources, Newztext was also consulted. Thirdly, the *Manawatū Heritage* website, operated by the Palmerston North City Library's Heritage Team, usefully provided digitised resources to an otherwise non-visual series of sources. Although this technically ties into the Ian

Matheson City Archives, *Manawatū Heritage* was important to this thesis in providing images and photographic materials to help identify features of and changes to Coleman Place overtime.

Throughout this thesis, gaps in various sources regarding periods where Coleman Place may have been discussed, such as the missing Palmerston North Borough Council Meeting Minutes 1877-1885, have been identified. Separately, it was noted that Coleman Place may not have been well documented at various points in time, with a reflection of this seen in the gaps between photographic sources of the area (especially in its early years of development). Despite these challenges, there has been sufficient surviving material examined to provide an overall picture of how Coleman Place has developed over time. Ultimately, the gaps that exist in the historical record are noted in the thesis where they stand, with an attempt to clarify them if further details from other sources can assist with an explanation of a gap.

Structure of Thesis

This thesis consists of three main chapters.

Chapter One discusses the historical context within which the development of Palmerston North and Coleman Place occurred. Particularly noted in a short discussion is the development of The Square as this helped shape the changing form Coleman Place took over time. It then evaluates the life of Sylvester Coleman, after whom Coleman Place is named, giving important context for the thesis while also adding to the knowledge of an early historical figure of Palmerston North who has hitherto received little historical attention.

Chapter Two discusses the emergence of Coleman Place and how it developed as a thoroughfare between the Square and George Street, with a mixture of private businesses and public buildings developing in the location. It also evaluates the changing nature of Coleman Place as a gathering place.

Chapter Three discusses the two redevelopments of Coleman Place around 1973 and 1996, with particular reference to how placemaking in the inner city was influenced by the interactions of three key agents: the city council; business owners in Coleman Place; and local interest groups. The discussion concludes with an evaluation of Coleman Place in the twenty-first century.

Chapter One: Background and Biography of Sylvester Coleman

This chapter discusses the formation of Palmerston North as it relates to setting the background context for the development of Coleman Place. Beginning with an overview of Palmerston North's history from the nineteenth to the twenty-first century, a discussion of The Square is also included as it relates to Coleman Place's development. The development of the centre's early commercial buildings around The Square, along with its use as a public space, helped set the stage for the gradual development of Coleman Place and helped to form its future use near this space. Important to understanding Coleman Place is knowing who Sylvester Coleman was. While Coleman's biography is not critical to understanding the development of Coleman Place in later periods, he is worth discussing in detail given his name's association to this area of Palmerston North. Moreover, as a significant early figure in Palmerston North's history, it is interesting to note how his legacy, which is comparable to other 'pioneers' in some aspects, has been largely forgotten despite his presence in various groups and through activities within the wider region.

An Overview of Palmerston North

Palmerston North's evolution from forest clearing to urban centre was a storied and lengthy process, reflecting the many changes that would materialise within the city itself and for Coleman Place.

The area of Palmerston North was first known as Te Papaioea by the Rangitāne iwi, who eventually came to settle the upper Manawatū region.⁶² The forest's natural wealth and its unique clearing, situated near the Manawatū River, made it suitable for a settlement, as Rangitāne recalled an ancestor of theirs as having once lived there.⁶³ In July 1864, Rangitāne finished prolonged negotiations with the colonial government to sell most of their recognised lands in the Ahuaturanga, or upper Manawatū, block, for £12,000, keeping unsold reserves for their Iwi at places such as Hokowhitu and Awapuni.⁶⁴ Previously, a surveyor named John Tiffin Stewart had made note of Papaioea as being suitable for a settlement in December

⁶² Meihana and Morris, "Tangata Whenua," 31.

⁶³ Ibid, 38; Also see Petersen, *Centennial History*, 53.

⁶⁴ Ian Matheson, *Council and Community*, 7.

1859, when the government and Rangitāne were interested in making a deal.⁶⁵ Stewart was later appointed chief district surveyor of the area and began surveying with a team in February 1866, to plot the settlement's features, which was presumably completed in June 1866 as the first sales of land took place in early November at Wellington.⁶⁶ Buick's *Old Manawatu* stated that "two manuka *whares* built by the surveyors on the section now occupied by the Union Bank of Australia" were among the first structures in the early days of the settlement.⁶⁷ According to later speculation and confirmation, the site on which Palmerston North was surveyed was done so on the future corner of where the town's centre, The Square, would connect to Coleman Place.⁶⁸

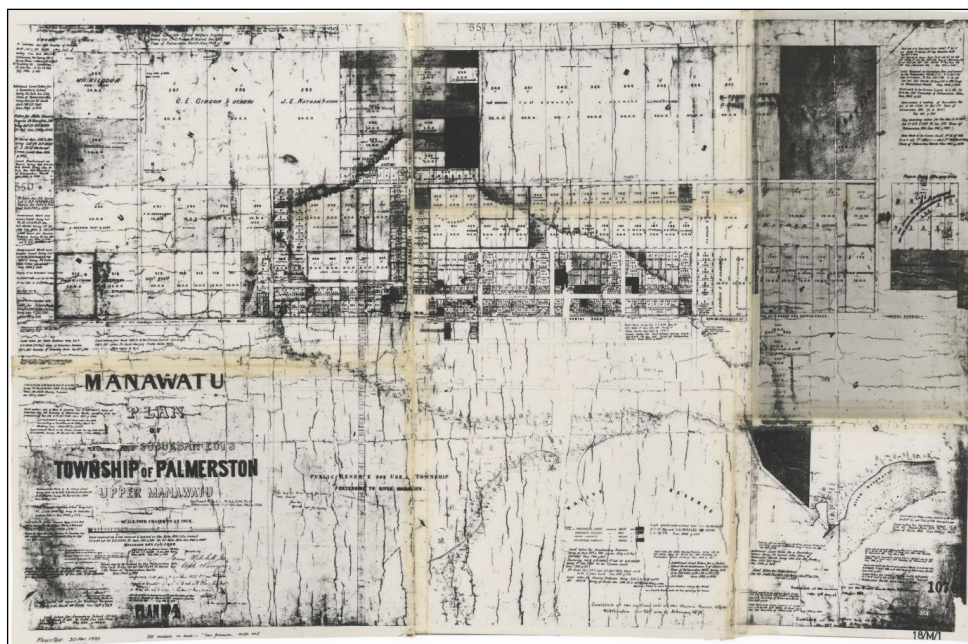


Image 5: 1866 Survey map of Palmerston North.⁶⁹

Palmerston North's placement by Stewart within the 800 acre forest clearing (as seen on Image 5) was influenced by several factors in avoiding the extremities of the surrounding geography.⁷⁰ While the clearing was an ideal spot for a settlement due to a lack of dense vegetation, the Manawatū River, flowing beyond the south of the clearing, was ignored. Jill White's thesis on the Manawatū River argued that the river was ignored (which has been

⁶⁵ Petersen, *Centennial History*, 52-55.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 58-61.

⁶⁷ Buick, *Old Manawatu*, 315.

⁶⁸ Petersen, *Centennial History*, 61-62.

⁶⁹ James Mitchell, "Plan of Town and Suburban Lots: Township of Palmerston, Upper Manawatu," July 24, 1866. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/4e856ace-4fe5-4123-958d-87d61a36754c> (Accessed November 23, 2022).

⁷⁰ *Ibid*; Petersen, *Centennial History*, 62.

reflected in other histories) due to it being a natural boundary for the area, which was prone to flooding, and the perception by European settlers that the river itself was an unreliable means of transportation.⁷¹ Given the area's relatively flat elevation, apart from terraces in the north-eastern sections of Palmerston North, planning development on or close to the river would mean risking any development to a potentially regular environmental hazard.⁷² While Stewart's placement meant that forest, swamp, and bush needed to be cleared or drained to extend the settlement out in realising the subdivision plans, this placed Palmerston North well to sprawl out of the Papaioea clearing over time as required. This has meant a marked transformation of the area with the consequence today that little of the original natural environment remains.⁷³

More importantly, in planning the settlement, Stewart foresaw that Palmerston (which became Palmerston North in 1871)⁷⁴ would become a convergence point within the region to link other areas, serving "as a communications and transportation node."⁷⁵ Development towards this aspiration was slow however. The first showing of European settlers did not occur until 1871, which included a group of 51 Scandinavians from the Vogel Government's immigration policies, so development of the town was slow despite their best efforts.⁷⁶ Given timber was the "only product of the district" in the early days with various mills developing, Stewart had previously advised in 1865 that a tramway was necessary to link "Papaioea to Ngawhakarau," which eventually emerged in 1873.⁷⁷ Coinciding with the Vogel Government's policies facilitating road and railway construction, the tramway eventually transformed into a proper railway line to the coastal town of Foxton in April 1876, after continued efforts to clear a way there succeeded.⁷⁸ While road connections sprouted to other parts of the region, it was undoubtedly the advent of the railway connection that fuelled the town's growth in size and commerce. The population growth of Palmerston North reflected these developments, with the area having around 200 residents in 1871, swelling to about 800 residents at the time of the first Borough Council in 1877.⁷⁹ By 1881, Palmerston North was

⁷¹ White, "An Uneasy Relationship: Palmerston North City and the Manawatu River, 1941-2006," 12-13.

⁷² Michael Roche, "An Environmental History," In *City at the Centre: A History of Palmerston North*, Eds. Margaret Tennant, Geoff Watson, and Kerry Taylor (Auckland: Massey University Press, 2020), 65.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 89-90.

⁷⁴ *New Zealand Mail*, "News of the Week," July 22, 1871, 12.

⁷⁵ Russell Poole, "Building the City," In *City at the Centre: A History of Palmerston North*, Eds. Margaret Tennant, Geoff Watson, and Kerry Taylor (Auckland: Massey University Press, 2020), 121.

⁷⁶ Petersen, *Centennial History*, 67-74.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 76-81

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 82-83.

⁷⁹ Grant Smith, "Foreword," In *City at the Centre: A History of Palmerston North*, Eds. Margaret Tennant, Geoff Watson, and Kerry Taylor (Auckland: Massey University Press, 2020), 9.

described by Petersen as having had an increasing number of developed commercial buildings near its centre, particularly around the outside of The Square with “a row of cottages in Taonui Street” nearby, with cottages also appearing at the sawmills at Terrace End.⁸⁰



Image 6: View across The Square to the north west corner, 1878. A surveyors pyramid can be seen in the right background quadrant near where Coleman Place would develop, with little else in that part of town.⁸¹

By the early twentieth century, Palmerston North was continuing its development towards becoming the important regional centre that Stewart had previously envisioned. Matheson noted that the town’s population had trebled between 1896 and 1926, from 5,910 to 18,143 people.⁸² Owing to this was the centre’s integration into “the main trunk railway link to Auckland in 1908 [which] increased Palmerston North’s importance as a transport and distribution centre”.⁸³ The development of agriculture in the region, as natural resource industries faded, undoubtedly helped fuel an expansion of jobs and urbanisation in town.⁸⁴ This allowed for the Borough Council to become “one of the largest and most influential organisations in Palmerston North,” with an expansion in staff and borrowing capacity to

⁸⁰ Petersen, *Centennial History*, 78.

⁸¹ William James Harding, “Looking across The Square to the newly developing town,” 1878. Manawātū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/a1041521-3e89-46fe-ba54-d19c2e8f9213> (Accessed August 2, 2022).

⁸² Matheson, *Council and Community*, 20.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 22.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 20-23.

improve both utility and recreational features of the town.⁸⁵ Eventually, Palmerston North achieved city status in 1930, having reached 20,000 people, though growth would slow during the Great Depression and Second World War.⁸⁶ Though this period tested aspects of Palmerston North and the ‘new’ City Council,⁸⁷ this did not stop future plans from taking shape as the city’s continued economic and population growth led to the expansion of new suburbs, such as Milson, Kelvin Grove, Awapuni, and Highbury, in the 1950’s and 1960’s.⁸⁸ Prior to this period, Massey Agricultural College opened in 1928, which would later become an important educational draw for the city.⁸⁹ By the mid-century, with agriculture still important for the local economy, Palmerston North gradually became a centre for tertiary education with a new teachers college opening in 1956 and later Massey Agricultural College becoming Massey University in 1964. Altogether, these developments made a significant impact upon the future of the city.⁹⁰

Beyond this period, particularly towards the end of the century, Palmerston North had in some ways become less reliant in its role as a service sector centre to its rural hinterland with a growing public sector.⁹¹ Despite this shift, private sector jobs, like in retail, remained important.⁹² By the twenty-first century the city had reached a size of over 70,000 and had increasingly become aware, thanks to changes in the role of the Council and greater understanding of its development, of the differences in its past and present.⁹³ As will be discussed later in chapter three, by the late 1960’s, and early 1970’s, the City Council had taken on a much greater role in shaping the city to become a modern urban centre that would continue to grow and adapt to future change.

⁸⁵ Matheson, *Council and Community*, 25.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 30.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 32-35.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 38-39.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 31.

⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 42-43.

⁹¹ Margaret Tennant and Simon Johnson, “A City at Work,” In *City at the Centre: A History of Palmerston North*, Eds. Margaret Tennant, Geoff Watson, and Kerry Taylor (Auckland: Massey University Press, 2020), 138-143.

⁹² *Ibid*.

⁹³ Matheson, *Council and Community*, 54-76.

The Square

In discussing Palmerston North's history, it is difficult to ignore the impact The Square has had in general for the city and for Coleman Place. As noted in other places in New Zealand, such as in Katie Pickles' work on Christchurch, public squares have been identified as being important spaces in which various activities take place.⁹⁴

Although Stewart's survey was not situated in the centre of the Papaioea clearing,⁹⁵ The Square's inclusion, at 17 acres,⁹⁶ centred Palmerston North's layout. Palmerston North's major roads, as described by Petersen, intersected The Square to the point that it created a "severely rectangular pattern of the streets" through the town.⁹⁷ This configuration has remained largely unchanged throughout Palmerston North's history. In the early years, The Square was noted to be somewhat unpopular due to its unavailability to be developed for commercial purposes.⁹⁸ Petersen posited that like the other town surveys Stewart worked on in the region, the point of The Square's inclusion was both in anticipation that Palmerston North would grow to become a large connecting centre for the region and also to provide an adequate public space for its people.⁹⁹

Eventually as the town took shape, businesses began to develop on the outside sections of The Square. This became more pronounced after the connection of the railway line to Foxton in 1876, with the middle of The Square housing Palmerston North's railway station.¹⁰⁰

Although the station would relocate west to Main Street in 1890, the railway connection enabled the adjoining areas of The Square to further develop as Palmerston North's businesses grew in numbers, leading to a concentration of commercial buildings and activity around it. The development of George Street, which is outlined in the following chapter, is perhaps more a result of the commercial intensification around The Square than what occurred at Coleman Place, though both were shaped by these developments.

⁹⁴ Katie Pickles, "Christchurch's Cathedral Square and the Importance of Public Squares," *New Zealand Journal of Public History* 8 (2022): 13.

⁹⁵ Roche, "An Environmental History," 65.

⁹⁶ Poole, "Building the City," 96.

⁹⁷ Petersen, *Centennial History*, 62.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Petersen, *Pioneering Days*, 66.



Image 7: Commercial buildings on the outer properties of The Square, early 1882, looking toward Coleman Place (which appeared to have one sizable structure present there at this time).¹⁰¹

The public space aspect of The Square is also significant as it relates to Coleman Place. While no comprehensive history of The Square has been written in its own right, the space has been noted throughout Palmerston North's history, in a variety of sources, to have been a public space with a range of uses. Although the physical presentation of the space has changed many times, its use as a leisure, gathering, and meeting place has many examples. This was also reflected when Rangitāne named The Square Te Marae-o-Hine, the Courtyard of the Daughter of Peace, in 1878.¹⁰² This name in more recent memory has become further important, recalling a hope by Rangitāne that all peoples in Palmerston North “would live together in peace and harmony.”¹⁰³

Around the turn of the twentieth century, as noted in the second chapter, significant celebrations or events were often marked with gatherings around The Square. Because of Coleman Place's proximity in being attached to The Square, it was noted to be an auxiliary location for people to gather nearby. Although this gradually changed, the later Palmerston North City Council's modernising efforts saw the space reimagined to incorporate it partly into a civic complex. The Reynolds Plan that appeared around 1969, referred to as the Reynolds report in chapter three, particularly considered how spaces in the inner city should be utilised to serve the public.¹⁰⁴ While this did not occur exactly (as pictured in Image 8), Coleman Place's proximity to The Square shaped in part some decisions around its use and configuration as a space moving towards the twenty-first century.

¹⁰¹ Photographer Unknown, “The Square Looking towards Coleman Place,” Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/f90927c3-068b-4e0c-b16d-3a33fcc989c2> (Accessed August 2, 2022).

¹⁰² Matheson, *Council and Community*, 10-11.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 50.

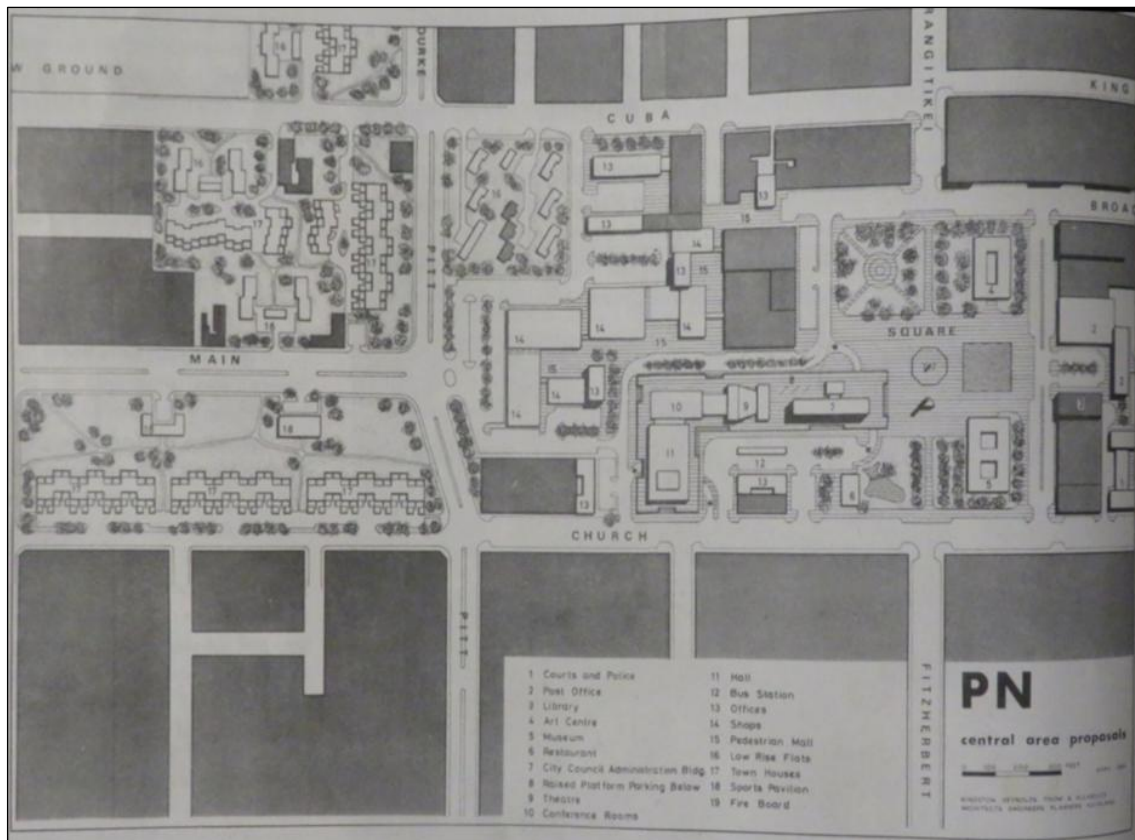


Image 8: Picture showing a plan of the inner city’s redevelopment as imagined as part of the Reynolds Plan.¹⁰⁵

Biography of Sylvester Coleman

Sylvester Coleman (1828-29 December 1881), for whom the eponymously Coleman Place is named after, has not been well remembered in much of Palmerston North’s and the wider region’s early history. Despite this, he stood out during his time amongst similar settlers who came, sought, and benefited from the relatively new and distant New Zealand colony. Like many who sought to improve their lives through gaining and improving their material and social standing, Coleman certainly achieved this within his lifetime. Despite setbacks, Coleman became an important and notable member of Palmerston North’s community as a borough councillor and businessman, joining in with and helping his community.

Coleman’s early history is difficult to describe with great certainty. Genealogical research and a copy of his New Zealand Death Register entry suggest that he was born about 1828 in

¹⁰⁵ Image taken from Matheson, *Council and Community*, 50.

England.¹⁰⁶ An archival folder in the Palmerston North Community Archives produced by Brian K. Mountjoy shows that on Sylvester's baptismal record, four months before his death, he named his parents as Benjamin and Jane Coleman.¹⁰⁷ This conflicts with the information on his death registration that was given by "a friend and fellow Masonic Lodge member, Duncan A. Poole."¹⁰⁸ The *Ancestry.com* 1841 England census record for Benjamin and Jane Coleman and their children living in St Boltoph Aldgate, Borough of Tower Hamlets in London, England, show what is likely Sylvester, age 12, mistakenly given his surname as his first name.¹⁰⁹ In this census his father Benjamin was recorded as a shipping agent, and in the 1851 census an "Agent Dealer - Clothes."¹¹⁰ On Sylvester's death registration Benjamin was recorded as a Merchant.¹¹¹ Without knowing for certain further details about where Sylvester lived or what he did prior to his appearance in New Zealand, like many people who migrated to the young colony, it is impossible to conclude exactly when and why he left England. What appears likely however, common for migrants leaving Europe in this era, was that there were perceived opportunities and improvements to be gained from leaving to better himself in foreign lands, such as the developing British colonies in the South Pacific.¹¹² Due to the difficulty in obtaining travel logs, it is impossible to identify where and when Sylvester first arrived in New Zealand. Mountjoy also noted this, having stated "whether he came direct from England, or from Australia, or from some other part of the Colony I do not know."¹¹³

Whatever the reason Coleman left England, he is first noted as being in New Zealand in 1862 orbiting various commercial partnerships. Although it is speculative, it seems likely that his family's mercantile background may have influenced his decision to go into business partnerships as Coleman was noted in the *Otago Daily Times* as signing off as a 'householder' on a "Claimant's Signature," in April that year.¹¹⁴ He is subsequently noted in various business matters in newspapers between then and 1864, with a business partnership in

¹⁰⁶ Steph Heaphy, "Research Notes on Coleman Family," (Unpublished); Ministry of Internal Affairs, "Copy of death registry in the district of Palmerston North during the quarter ending the thirty first of December, 1881," Death printout from 1 Jan 1875 - Coleman, Sylvester - 1881/3738.

¹⁰⁷ Palmerston North Community Archives, Family Profiles Series 2 Folder 1, "Sylvester Coleman Palmerston North City Councillor. 1878-1881," 1.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ S Heaphy, "Research Notes on Coleman Family."

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Belich, *Making Peoples*, 376-410.

¹¹³ Palmerston North Community Archives, Family Profiles Series 2 Folder 1, "Sylvester Coleman Palmerston North City Councillor. 1878-1881," 1.

¹¹⁴ *Otago Daily Times*, "Advertisements," April 16, 1862, 7.

Alexandra dissolved after having “a meeting of creditors” in January.¹¹⁵ Later that year, Coleman is noted as having been put in charge of debt settling in a dissolution of a “partnership by mutual consent on the 30th of August,” with two associates also named.¹¹⁶

Seeing as the Central Otago Gold Rush was well underway by this time, this may be what drew Coleman to Otago in the first place. Within two years, after business partnerships dissolved and the gold rush gradually moving elsewhere, Coleman was then noted in August 1866 by the *Wanganui Chronicle* as having arrived in Wanganui.¹¹⁷ Unfortunately due to a familiar lack of detail on who he travelled with, he either arrived on the S. S. Wanganui on August 18, as Mountjoy claimed,¹¹⁸ or he arrived the following day on the S.S. Wallaby from Nelson as “Mr and Mrs Coleman,” alongside Bishop Monrad and his family.¹¹⁹ Regardless, Coleman was noted by Mountjoy as having soon “set himself up as a Commission Agent in Taupo Quay” in the town,¹²⁰ which is confirmed by advertisements in the *Wanganui Chronicle*.¹²¹ As in Otago, Coleman made various appearances in newspapers over the following years typically for business issues, such as a civil case between him and his premises’ owners,¹²² or was noted for once taking someone to court for “abusive language,” which was instead “settled out of court.”¹²³

Unlike in Otago, Coleman took a more obvious role in Wanganui’s community life as noted by various newspapers after establishing himself there. In February 1869, he became the Wanganui Fire Brigades’ secretary.¹²⁴ Soon after, he relocated to nearby Marton to run the “Traveller’s Rest Hotel” in March,¹²⁵ later being appointed Poundkeeper of Marton in June.¹²⁶ That same year when Marton’s Hall opened in December 1869, Coleman appeared amongst key community members supporting its opening as both a ticket provider and the

¹¹⁵ *Otago Daily Times*, “Supreme Court.,” January 11, 1864, 5.

¹¹⁶ *Otago Witness*, “Advertisements,” November 5, 1864, 21.

¹¹⁷ *Wanganui Chronicle*, “Shipping Intelligence.,” August 22, 1866, 2. Given Whanganui was historically spelled as Wanganui until November 19, 2017, this thesis has opted to use the historical spelling as referred to by sources of this era.

¹¹⁸ Palmerston North Community Archives, Family Profiles Series 2 Folder 1, “Sylvester Coleman Palmerston North City Councillor. 1878-1881,” 1.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Wanganui Chronicle*, “Advertisements,” October 17, 1866, 3.

¹²² *Wanganui Chronicle*, “Local Intelligence.,” February 16, 1867, 2.

¹²³ *Wanganui Chronicle*, “Untitled,” July 4, 1868, 2.

¹²⁴ *Wanganui Chronicle*, “Fire Brigade Meeting.,” February 10, 1869, 2.

¹²⁵ Palmerston North Community Archives, Family Profiles Series 2 Folder 1, “Sylvester Coleman Palmerston North City Councillor. 1878-1881,” 1.

¹²⁶ *Wellington Independent*, “Advertisements,” July 10, 1869, 3.

caterer for the occasion.¹²⁷ Later, in 1871, he was part of the building committee for St. Stephen's Church which opened October 26.¹²⁸ Furthermore, Coleman continued to be involved in his community through patronage of various events, such as assisting with a Marton Amateur Dramatic Society production in March 1872, providing a "magical lantern" display.¹²⁹ At some unknown point, he formed Marton's Army Cadet Corps and defended the institution as a good activity for adolescent boys in light of "a tirade against the system of Volunteer Cadet Corps" which appeared in the *Southern Cross* newspaper.¹³⁰ In August 1873, Coleman was elected, with the most support according to Mountjoy, to the inaugural Marton "Board of Commissioners," serving as chairman, although he was later 'deposed' by other board members and "so he resigned."¹³¹ Mountjoy also stated that Coleman's involvement with the Masonic Lodge and Foresters Lodge began in Marton, although the former became more significant when he arrived in Palmerston North.¹³²

Coleman's professional life at Marton took an ironic setback in having become more acquainted with being involved in bankruptcy proceedings. Starting in May 1872, Coleman was first appointed as a trustee to the estate of a bankrupt person, the notice appearing in New Zealand's *Bankruptcy Gazette* which featured in major newspapers during this period.¹³³ Bankruptcy during the gradual Long Depression period became increasingly common, with rates and cases rising to all time highs by the end of this decade.¹³⁴ Coleman would continue to appear in similar newspaper advertisements, declaring his appointment as a trustee to many bankrupts' estates, until his death. The following year in 1873, Coleman had, according to Mountjoy, begun auctioneering "selling cattle, land, and just about anything."¹³⁵ This may have been a factor in his own bankruptcy in May 31, 1875, when he triggered the insolvency process.¹³⁶ With advertisements in the newspapers giving notice to this fact, Coleman was found at his trial to have had a history of "reckless management," having previously lost his

¹²⁷ *Wanganui Chronicle*, "Advertisements," November 25, 1869, 3.

¹²⁸ *Wanganui Chronicle*, "Marton," November 2, 1931, 3.

¹²⁹ *Wanganui Herald*, "Untitled," March 30, 1872, 2.

¹³⁰ *Wanganui Herald*, "Cadets," April 10, 1872, 2.

¹³¹ *Wellington Independent*, "Advertisements," September 16, 1873, 4; Palmerston North Community Archives, Family Profiles Series 2 Folder 1, "Sylvester Coleman Palmerston North City Councillor. 1878-1881," 1.

¹³² Palmerston North Community Archives, Family Profiles Series 2 Folder 1, "Sylvester Coleman Palmerston North City Councillor. 1878-1881," 1.

¹³³ *Wanganui Herald*, "Advertisements," May 18, 1872, 3.

¹³⁴ W.J. Gardner, "A Colonial Economy," In *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd Ed., Geoffrey W. Rice, Ed., (Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992), 76.

¹³⁵ Palmerston North Community Archives, Family Profiles Series 2 Folder 1, "Sylvester Coleman Palmerston North City Councillor. 1878-1881," 1.

¹³⁶ *Wanganui Herald*, "Advertisements," May 31, 1875, 3.

cashbook.¹³⁷ Eventually, the court concluded he had effectively been insolvent since July 1874.¹³⁸ The judge considered criminal penalties before reassessing the penalty to wait two years to discharge his bankruptcy status, on account of his character and situation.¹³⁹ The *Wanganui Chronicle* provided details of this, stating that Coleman was ill sometime during his insolvency and that he was assisted by “a young person” who he gave stock to for helping him to “probably” survive the illness.¹⁴⁰ This, along with the reputation and involvement he had in his community, undoubtedly afforded him another opportunity to come out of this difficult time.

What he then did while remaining at Marton is unknown other than he married his wife, Margaret Frances Goodison, the following year on March 15, 1876.¹⁴¹ Genealogical research strongly suggests that they met long before this period as Mrs Coleman had given birth to two daughters, Victoria Margaret Coleman in 1871, and Caroline Sylvia Coleman in 1874.¹⁴² It was not unheard of for people to claim they were married without any official recognition during the Victorian era. The year following their marriage the family moved to Palmerston North.

By this stage Palmerston North was the emerging town of the Manawatū district, which considering Coleman’s past failings likely helped to attract the family with new opportunities to better themselves. Despite his bankruptcy status, he almost secured the licence to the Palmerston North Hotel in January 1877. While the local Licensing Bench ultimately declined the licence transferral, it was the police who stopped the process due to Mrs Coleman’s ‘unfit’ character, her having apparently been convicted previously for theft and an apparent belief that “her family connections were in other respects questionable.”¹⁴³ Coleman threatened action against this rejection for libel; though it appears unlikely he followed through given there were no further references to it in later newspapers.¹⁴⁴

Despite not appearing to make the best start in Palmerston North, Coleman soon returned to the activities which benefited him and his family. Again, he began reappearing in the

¹³⁷ *Wanganui Chronicle*, “Sittings in Bankruptcy.,” October 28, 1875, 2.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Ministry of Internal Affairs, “Copy of death registry.” Although this is a death record, it contains the date of Margaret and Sylvester’s marriage.

¹⁴² S Heaphy, “Research Notes on Coleman Family.”

¹⁴³ *Evening Post*, “Friday,” January 5, 1877, 2.; *Manawatu Times*, “Resident Magistrate’s Court, Palmerston,” January 6, 1877, 3.

¹⁴⁴ *Evening Post*, “Thursday,” January 11, 1877, 2.

newspapers, mainly in the *Manawatu Times*, to advertise himself as a businessman of various services. Bankruptcy accounting appeared to have been his primary focus after obtaining certification in 1879,¹⁴⁵ though notices for auctioneering services, the selling of properties and land around the town, as well as the loaning of money to others (or for investment purposes), appeared more frequently in the following years. Specifically for auctioneering, Coleman appeared to have only undertaken one large auction of livestock after obtaining a licence in May 1881.¹⁴⁶ Equally, his other services appear to have been closely linked to his role as a busy bankruptcy accountant, as advertised in his own column in late 1879.¹⁴⁷ At one stage when there was gold-fever “in the hills behind Fitzherbert,” Petersen noted that “Coleman set up a small crushing plant behind his store in The Square,” apparently in a creative effort to facilitate an opportunity if it led to something further.¹⁴⁸

Coleman’s involvement with his community came into prominence as his participation in various groups in Rangitikei spilled over into Palmerston North. According to Mountjoy, in what was likely his first notable appearance within the town, appearing in the *Manawatu Times*, Coleman addressed in late November 1877 “a meeting of citizens in the formation of a Fire Brigade for Palmerston North and donated £1.1.0. to the volunteer brigade.”¹⁴⁹

Unfortunately, this supposed article could not be found on Papers Past. However, the following year Coleman was elected to the town’s first school committee during its election, not long after the 1877 Education Act came into effect.¹⁵⁰ In August 1878, he volunteered to become Palmerston North School’s drill instructor for “two hours each week,” something the *Manawatu Times* noted that there was a desire for the school to have.¹⁵¹ Coleman continued his involvement with the Foresters, although to what level is unknown as he is only once mentioned in a notice selling tickets with others for an “Indian Famine Relief Fund” in November 1877.¹⁵² More significant was his connection and involvement in the Masonic Lodge, of which he was a founding member of the “United Manawatu Lodge” in October

¹⁴⁵ *New Zealand Times*, “Untitled,” July 4, 1879, 2.

¹⁴⁶ *Wanganui Herald*, “Wanganui Harbor Board Endowment,” May 5, 1881, 3; *Manawatu Times*, “News and Notes,” May 7, 1881, 2.

¹⁴⁷ *Manawatu Times*, “Advertisements,” October 4, 1879, 4.

¹⁴⁸ Petersen, *Pioneering Days*, 96-97.

¹⁴⁹ Palmerston North Community Archives, Family Profiles Series 2 Folder 1, “Sylvester Coleman Palmerston North City Councillor. 1878-1881,” 2.

¹⁵⁰ *Manawatu Times*, “Untitled,” June 12, 1878, 2.

¹⁵¹ *Manawatu Times*, “Untitled,” August 17, 1878, 2.

¹⁵² *Manawatu Times*, “Advertisements,” November 17, 1877, 2.

1877.¹⁵³ Two histories of the United Manawatu Lodge indicate that it was in Coleman’s rented office space in The Square that the Lodge meetings first took place until they funded a separate building for themselves.¹⁵⁴ This occurred in 1880, when Mayor James Linton declared October 22 a public holiday, as a result of a petition by the Masonic Lodge, for the “opening and dedication of the new Masonic Hall in Palmerston.”¹⁵⁵ Given this, their prior meetings in the two story building, which contained a bakery and various rooms, appeared to be because of Coleman.¹⁵⁶ Aside from this, not much else can be known from Coleman’s involvement with the Freemasons other than his rank of Senior Deacon, as the town hall fire of August 1885 is believed to have destroyed any relevant early historical documents to this period of Palmerston North’s early history.¹⁵⁷



Image 9: Sylvester Coleman rented office space in the centre two-story building, left of the Clarendon Hotel pictured on the right (which later burned down).¹⁵⁸

What would have attracted Coleman to the ‘friendly societies’ of his time, the Order of The Foresters, and Freemasonry, would have been similar to what drew many others during this time. While social reasons for meeting people and creating a sense of community would have ranked highly in the creation and maintenance of such groups, when the New Zealand

¹⁵³ *Wanganui Herald*, “Opening of the New Masonic Lodge at Palmerston.,” October 29, 1877, 2; Palmerston North Community Archives, Family Profiles Series 2 Folder 1, “Sylvester Coleman Palmerston North City Councillor. 1878-1881,” 2.

¹⁵⁴ Leslie William Gorman, *Centennial History of The United Manawatu Lodge, 1721, E.C., Palmerston North, 1877-1977* (Palmerston North: Keeling and Mundy Ltd., 1977), 13-15; Philip Samuel Larcomb, *History of United Manawatu Lodge No. 1721, E.C. and of Other Masonic Lodges of the District From 1877 to 1922* (Palmerston North: Keeling and Mundy, 1923), 11.

¹⁵⁵ *Manawatu Times*, “Advertisements,” October 16, 1880, 3.

¹⁵⁶ Gorman, *The United Manawatu Lodge*, 11.

¹⁵⁷ Larcomb, *History of United Manawatu Lodge*, 12-13; *Feilding Star*, “Fire in Palmerston,” August 6, 1885, 3.

¹⁵⁸ George W Shailer, “Clarendon Hotel on West end of the Square,” c.1882/1883. Manawātū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/720426b1-2a5d-40e2-b4a4-522f3a3421a9> (Accessed August 2, 2022).

Government did not yet provide any general social care, these ‘friendly societies’ helped through collective efforts to support their members.¹⁵⁹ Either through putting on events for charity, or through other ‘buy-in’ schemes, the purpose of these societies was to support their members in difficult times, such as when their health failed, if they needed some assistance, or for helping with funding funeral arrangements.

Coleman’s political significance in Palmerston North may be hard to evaluate due his short tenure before his death, but nonetheless his involvement was important. Due to the resignations of two councillors in early June 1878, the Palmerston North Borough Council, through new legislation, had the ability to nominate and appoint new councillors through an election.¹⁶⁰ Sylvester Coleman received a nomination and support from Mayor George Snelson, an early resident and inaugural mayor of Palmerston North, and Councillor George Roe (after whom George Street, which later connects to Coleman Place, was named).¹⁶¹ Despite standing against two future mayors, Alexander Fergusson, and Solomon Abrams, Coleman was elected first with 56 votes with Fergusson second receiving 55 votes.¹⁶² Although the *Manawatu Times* highlighted that only 47 electors out of 300 cast ballots, Coleman had in a short time gathered enough support that despite any blemish of bankruptcy his peers did not hold it against him due to his otherwise respected character.¹⁶³ Even with the close relationship many businessmen had in the early days of the town, such as later collaborations between Coleman and Snelson via auctioneering,¹⁶⁴ it seems unlikely that Coleman would have received the backing from the Council had they doubted his character. Because the election of councillors was apparently irregularly staggered at the beginning of the Borough Council, Coleman faced another election for the Council in September, only to triumph first again with 81 votes out of the five candidates (with four being elected).¹⁶⁵ Giving a short, magnanimous, speech afterwards near the council chambers, he expressed a wish to “see the Terrace End and the West End one end – in fact for the two ends to meet,” while pledging himself to serve only the town and resign when he could no longer do this.¹⁶⁶ The following year, Coleman went up against Councillor James Linton in the first contested mayoralty race (as Mayor Snelson had previously run unopposed). Coleman wrote in a

¹⁵⁹ David Thomson, *A World Without Welfare: New Zealand’s Colonial Experiment* (Auckland: Auckland University Press and Bridget Williams Books, 1998), 35-36.

¹⁶⁰ *Manawatu Times*, “Untitled,” June 5, 1878, 2.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Manawatu Times*, “News and Notes.,” May 7, 1881, 2.

¹⁶⁵ *Manawatu Times*, “The Borough Elections.,” September 14, 1878, 2.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Manawatu Times column that he had received calls of support to run and, after seeing another candidate did not put themselves forward, decided to run.¹⁶⁷ When the election occurred on November 26, 1879, Coleman was unsuccessful, being outvoted 43 to 82, but both candidates shook hands.¹⁶⁸ In speaking of Coleman, Linton said “I have nothing to say against my friend, Councillor Coleman, with whom I have been intimately acquainted for some years, and during which time I have always found him to be one who took a deep interest in the welfare of this town and its inhabitants.”¹⁶⁹ Later, Coleman and Councillor E. E. Metard nominated Henry McNeil in January 1880 to fill Mayor Linton’s vacant seat, which succeeded unopposed.¹⁷⁰

Unfortunately, what Coleman achieved on the Council cannot be known fully as the key volume of the Palmerston North Borough Council Meeting Minutes between 1877 to 1885 was likely destroyed in the 1885 town hall fire, or has since been misplaced. Although the Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Private) 1878-1888 survived, it recorded little specifically of Coleman’s involvement other than attendance of meetings, such as in two Public Reserve Committee meetings in 1880, dated May 11 and August 31.¹⁷¹ Given this, it appeared that he did not have a particularly strong impact on the Borough Council itself. However, this was likely normal during this period as councillors worked without pay and did not appear to have specific portfolios to work on.

What is significant during his time on the Council, as the *Manawatu Times* recorded in May 4, 1881, was that Coleman requested for “leave to erect a sign-board across the pathway at his business premises in Coleman Place,” which the Council allowed.¹⁷² As the article indicated, the Council, at an unknown prior date, likely bestowed Coleman’s name for the area officially as he had acquired ownership of blocks of land between there and Cuba Street. Coleman’s chief contribution to the city’s history then is being among the first of Palmerston North’s earliest figures to have had part of the area named after themselves (although not primarily for community service activities in his case). However, as noted by the *Manawatū Standard*, it was apparently Coleman who convinced the paper’s founder Alexander McMinn to set up a daily newspaper in the town, demonstrating his influence was not as localised as to stay in

¹⁶⁷ *Manawatu Times*, “Advertisements,” November 19, 1879, 3.

¹⁶⁸ *Manawatu Times*, “The Contest for the Mayoralty,” November 29, 1879, 2.

¹⁶⁹ *Manawatu Times*, “The Mayoral Contest,” November 26, 1879, 2.

¹⁷⁰ *Manawatu Times*, “News and Notes.,” January 17, 1880, 2.

¹⁷¹ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2, “Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 29 January 1878 - 13 January 1888.” Page numbers were not given in meeting records, so refer to the committee dates.

¹⁷² *Manawatu Times*, “Palmerston Borough Council.,” May 7, 1881, 2.

one part of the region.¹⁷³ Notably, according to Buick's *Old Manawatu*, on November 29, 1880, "Mr. Sylvester Coleman, a well-known pioneer" received the first copy of the continuously published newspaper.¹⁷⁴

Unfortunately, later in 1881 Sylvester Coleman died on December 29 of "hypertrophy abscess [of] the liver."¹⁷⁵ The *Manawatu Times* reported that he had "a long and painful illness" for five months at home, dying at 53.¹⁷⁶ Although this was undoubtedly known by the public due to his absence in the community, it is significant that the *Manawatu Times* reported that he had just been re-elected to the Council. Noting his service and a recent election, apparently "on the last occasion the burgesses paid him the graceful compliment of again returning him, when he was on, what proved to be, his death bed."¹⁷⁷ While sources do not explain anything about this curiosity, there was an election scheduled for the date Coleman died on in order to fill a vacated seat by another councillor.¹⁷⁸ Matheson's notes clarify that Coleman was however "re-elected in [an] annual election of 8 September 1881",¹⁷⁹ with the *Manawatu Times* corroborating the election date.¹⁸⁰ Although it is possible that his seat could have been up for election immediately before his death, it seems more likely that it was later filled the following year.

Regardless, the *Manawatu Times* article praised his "open-handed generosity" towards those in need when his "business was going to ruin," apparently due to a bad business partnership and his illness.¹⁸¹ Noting his connections to Wanganui and Marton, his community involvement was celebrated as someone who "was always at work, taking a most prominent part in all public matters and affairs," with his involvement with Cadets and youth activities highlighted.¹⁸² The loss and celebration of Coleman was evidenced by the funeral arrangements which included "the flag at Town Hall [being] placed half-mast high" shortly after he died, with a long procession at his funeral two days later that included the Freemasons, his family, the Foresters, and others from the community.¹⁸³ Coleman was later

¹⁷³ *Manawatū Standard*, "How The "Standard" was Founded.," November 29, 1930, 11.

¹⁷⁴ Buick, *Old Manawatu*, 354.

¹⁷⁵ Palmerston North Community Archives, Family Profiles Series 2 Folder 1, "Sylvester Coleman Palmerston North City Councillor. 1878-1881," 1; Ministry of Internal Affairs, "Copy of death registry."

¹⁷⁶ *Manawatu Times*, "Death of Mr Coleman.," December 31, 1881, 2.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Manawatu Times*, "News and Notices.," December 14, 1881, 2.

¹⁷⁹ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/28 "Councillor Sylvester Coleman [1878-1881]."

¹⁸⁰ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," September 7, 1881, 3.

¹⁸¹ *Manawatu Times*, "Death of Mr Coleman."

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

buried in Terrace End Cemetery, originally named the “Settler’s Cemetery,” although he may have been first buried in the town’s first cemetery located on the grounds of the current Central Energy Trust Arena (previously known as the Showgrounds).¹⁸⁴ Coleman’s passing was also noted by *The Wanganui Chronicle* with shorter details of his contributions to the region,¹⁸⁵ as well as national telegram news also noting his passing as “a member of the Borough Council.”¹⁸⁶ It is not clear how his family managed immediately after his death, although it appeared that Mrs Coleman continued a similar life of commerce and business disputes from two court related articles.¹⁸⁷ Ironically, sometime in the 1890’s she became the proprietor of the Wellington Metropolitan Hotel, as evidenced by her will,¹⁸⁸ but later died age 43 of uterine cancer in Wellington, May 2, 1893.¹⁸⁹ The Coleman’s daughters would later marry, with only Victoria going on to have children.¹⁹⁰

Like many colonists who came to New Zealand in search of improvement, it appears certain that Sylvester Coleman’s ambitions and rewards were greatly achieved in his move to Palmerston North. Though Coleman has largely been obscured in Palmerston North’s history, partially by later being remembered for convincing Alexander McMinn to found the *Manawatū Standard* there, it is clear his business interests influenced more than just the newspaper history in the area.¹⁹¹ Despite difficulties and questions about his character, few people must have cared about any supposed ‘disqualifying’ concerns because of his passion and involvement in the ‘friendly societies’ and community activities of his time. In a wider view of what Fairburn partially argued in *The Ideal Society and its Enemies*, Coleman’s life, in tracking his relationships to others and earning public acceptance in Wanganui and Palmerston North in a short period, cuts against an idea that transience was a dominating feature in colonial New Zealand that prevented any sense of community. Although many of the things he participated in no longer take the same importance in modern Palmerston North,

¹⁸⁴ Steve Johnson, “Terrace End Cemetery Palmerston North, Manawatū-Whanganui, New Zealand,” INTERMENT.NET, March 20, 2020, http://www.interment.net/data/nz/wanganui_manawatu/terrace_end/index.htm#:~:text=Cemetery%20History,the%20Central%20Energy%20Trust%20Arena.

¹⁸⁵ *Wanganui Herald*, “Wanganui Herald. (Published Daily).,” December 30, 1881, 2.

¹⁸⁶ *Evening Post*, “Latest Telegrams,” December 30, 1881, 2.

¹⁸⁷ *Wanganui Chronicle*, “Resident Magistrate’s Court.,” July 14, 1883, 2; *Wanganui Chronicle*, “Resident Magistrate’s Court.,” January 17, 1885, 2.

¹⁸⁸ Wellington High Court, “Margaret Frances Coleman Will,” Archives New Zealand Te Rua Mahara o te Kāwanatanga, AAOM, Accession #W3265, Record #4126, Wellington.

¹⁸⁹ S Heaphy, “Research Notes on Coleman Family”; Palmerston North Community Archives, Family Profiles Series 2 Folder 1, “Sylvester Coleman Palmerston North City Councillor. 1878-1881,” 4; *New Zealand Mail*, “Death.,” May 5, 1893, 22.

¹⁹⁰ S Heaphy, “Research Notes on Coleman Family.”

¹⁹¹ *Manawatū Standard*, “How The “Standard” Was Founded,” November 29, 1930, 11.

Coleman undoubtedly left a persisting though silent legacy through his time as a businessman and borough councillor in setting up the early development of Coleman Place.

Chapter Two: A Century of Development (1870's to 1960's)

This chapter outlines the early history of Coleman Place, tracing the developments of its distinct place in Palmerston North for a near century. As evidenced by the gradual opening of the land in Sylvester Coleman's acquisition of the former government reserve, Coleman Place originally came about as an unplanned connecting space for commercial usage. While early commercial use developed organically and foreshadowed this as Coleman Place's dominant use as a space, its early use for some public services in the town, combined with its long-standing council ownership of the leases there, ensured that it could not be entirely dominated by one particular mode of use for a time. Despite gaps in various sources that make it difficult to precisely detail the development and growth of Coleman Place throughout this near century period, it was undoubtedly tied to Coleman's ownership that this section of the inner city began to develop. Although Coleman's attachment to the area faded quickly after his death, along with many of the first structures built in the area, Coleman Place's streetscape solidified in the twentieth century where several notable buildings were constructed and remained beyond this period. Being a central location attached to the city's centre, Coleman Place also served as a gathering place around the early twentieth century for people, but this practice did not persist as the century progressed.

The Boundaries and Early Formation of Coleman Place

The area of Coleman Place has had a varied understanding in how it has been defined and presented throughout its existence. While this could partially be an outcome from a lack of photographs taken of Coleman Place until the twentieth century, the way Palmerston North gradually developed meant that this area was at first slow to develop and establish itself.

As previously stated, the land of Coleman Place, sited next to what would become The Square on its north western side, was first partially used by the surveyors as their base of operations to survey the rest of the settlement.¹⁹² While their first survey map gave an

¹⁹² Petersen, *Centennial History*, 61-62.

adequate outline of the divisions for the Township of Palmerston, the area where Coleman Place would be is somewhat obscured on the map due to smudging.¹⁹³

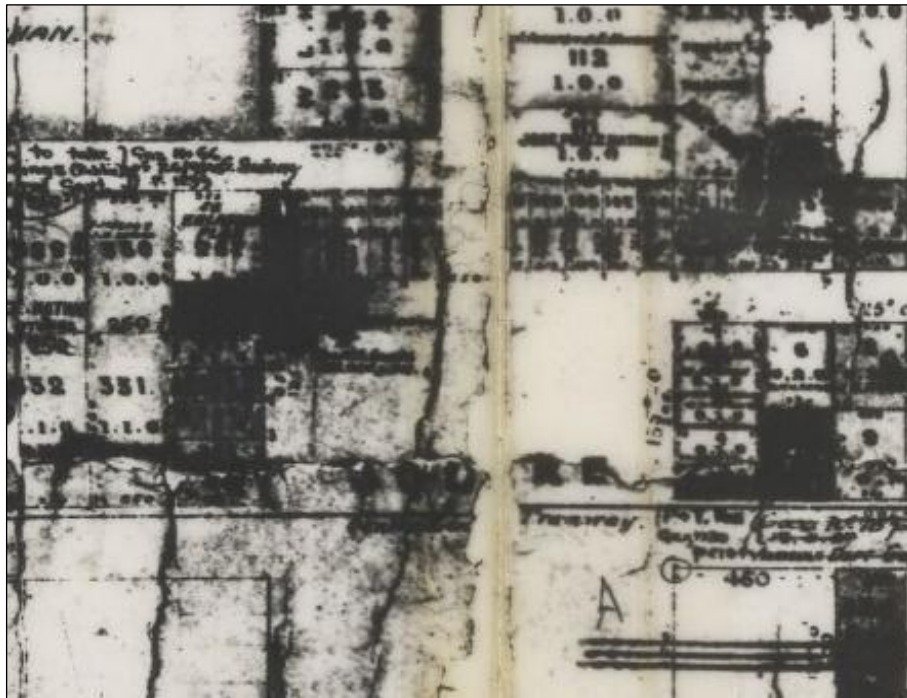


Image 10: 1866 Survey map close up of Palmerston North towards The Square, showing Coleman Place obscured.¹⁹⁴

It is clear though, as Bradfield pondered in asking why the surveyors put Cuba Street above The Square, that Coleman Place was not originally a planned feature of the town.¹⁹⁵ In a later survey map circa-1872 (Image 11), the land encompassing Coleman Place was shown in a large section bordering The Square and Cuba Street, similar to the rest of the divisions between Cuba Street and Main Street, but unlike those of the already smaller property divisions facing The Square on all sides.¹⁹⁶ Given that the site of the original survey was still present there years later,¹⁹⁷ as seen in some photography (see Image 6) of a surveyor's trig beyond that part of The Square, it seems likely that this is what was noted in this survey as other properties similarly have structures noted on them.

¹⁹³ James Mitchell, "Plan of Town and Suburban Lots: Township of Palmerston, Upper Manawatu," July 24, 1866. Manawātū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/4e856ace-4fe5-4123-958d-87d61a36754c> (Accessed November 23, 2022).

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Bradfield, *Forgotten Days*, 16.

¹⁹⁶ Henry Jackson, Chief Surveyor, "Plan of Town and Suburban Sections: Palmerston North, Manawatu," c. 1872?. Manawātū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/96923b1d-f56e-4a7d-bbf7-ca90ccf35d50> (Accessed November 23, 2022).

¹⁹⁷ Buick, *Old Manawatu*, 368.

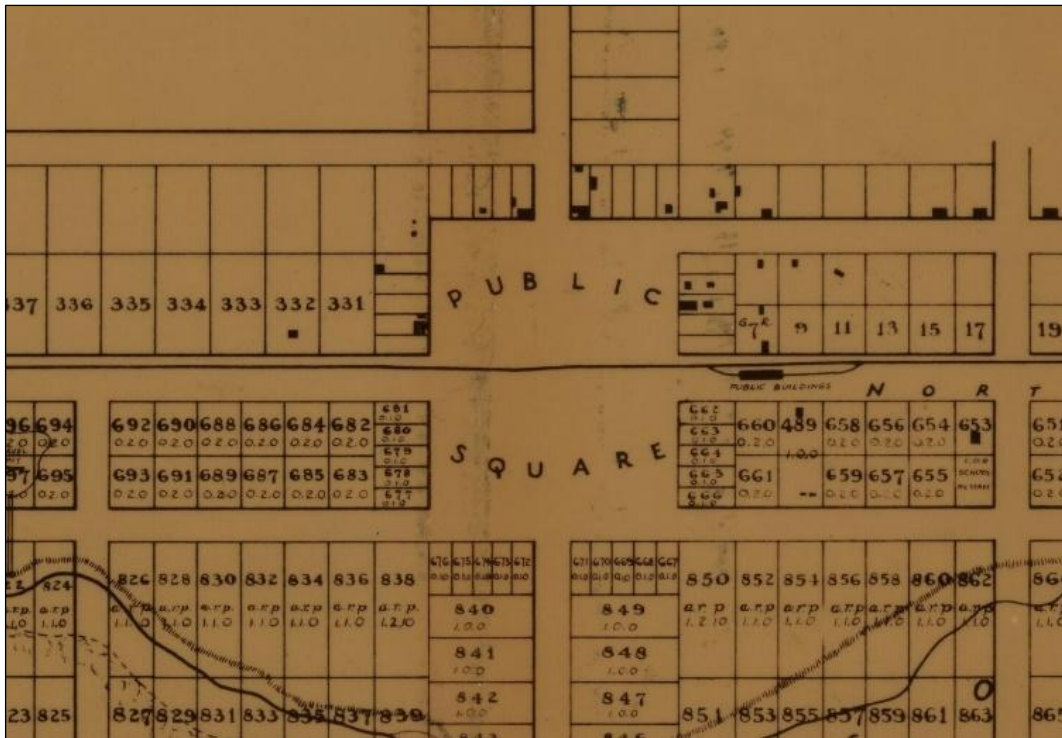


Image 11: Survey plan of Palmerston North circa 1872, zoomed onto The Square.¹⁹⁸

Bradfield stated in the section ‘History of Street Names’ of *Forgotten Days* that this block was “shown on [an] 1866 plan as Government Reserve,” which may have corresponded with a lack of identifying numbers for these blocks in the initial surveys.¹⁹⁹ This pattern continued with an 1878 survey showing that this land had no number attached to it, though two divisions on The Square’s north western side had been created (see Image 12). According to information about Coleman Place in Petersen's *Centennial History*, which incorrectly stated “it is thought that the focal point for the survey of Palmerston North was situated in Coleman Place (Section 259)”, these two divisions, which would become the road and other side of Coleman Place, would have been sections 257 and 258 (with these section numbers later being reassigned in later surveys).²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Henry Jackson, Chief Surveyor, “Plan of Town and Suburban Sections: Palmerston North, Manawatu” c. 1872. Manawatu Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/96923b1d-f56e-4a7d-bbf7-ca90ccf35d50> (Accessed November 23, 2022).

¹⁹⁹ Bradfield, *Forgotten Days*, 164.

²⁰⁰ Petersen, *Centennial History*, 61.

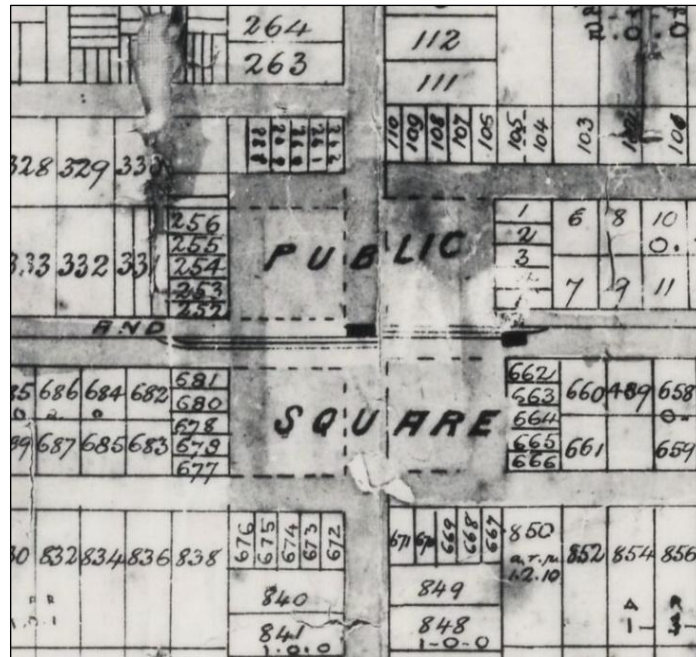


Image 12: Survey map of Palmerston North 1878, zoomed into The Square. The site which became Coleman Place is above section 256.²⁰¹

The idea that these divisions were set aside as a public reserve until 1879, when the Borough Council decided that year to grant themselves use of the land for leasing purposes, appears to be incorrect. According to an archival research file titled “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data prepared by students of Victoria University (1980),” two sections within this reserve, C1, and C2, (refer to Image 13) had already been subdivided and granted ownership to two individuals in 1876.²⁰² Lease information for the properties labelled ‘B’ indicate that the Borough Council subdivided this area in 1879.²⁰³ This contradicts a notice regarding this area in the *Manawatu Times*, October 9, 1878, which stated:

We would draw the especial attention of business men to the sale of Corporation leaseholds to take place to-day. The land is situated in Corporation street, or what will be better understood as a continuation of Broad street, and adjoining Mr Moffat’s butchery. Being in the very centre of the business part of the town, they are unsurpassed for business sites. The leases have fourteen years to run.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ John Barton, “Plan of Town and Suburban Sections, Palmerston North, Manawatu (Showing Subdivisions),” 1878. Manawātū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/9443f9a6-467c-45ff-8b13-7b23640da28f> (Accessed November 23, 2022).

²⁰² Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data prepared by students of Victoria University (1980).” Specific references, if made, to the properties that correspond with a specific area will be indicated in the footnote where appropriate.

²⁰³ Ibid, B1, B2, B3, B4, B6, B7, B8, B9.

²⁰⁴ *Manawatu Times*, “Untitled,” October 9, 1878, 2.

Although the Land Ownership Data could not confirm when Moffat’s ownership of C1 began between 1876 and 1880,²⁰⁵ given this notice and knowing that Broad Street (now Broadway Avenue) meets Coleman Place through The Square’s northern road, this must have meant that the Borough Council subdivided this area, perhaps even partially, no later than 1878. Importantly, this also meant that Coleman Place was first known as Corporation Street, though no other records, except some repeated *Manawatu Times* advertisements in October 1878, ever refer to Coleman Place as having a prior name.²⁰⁶

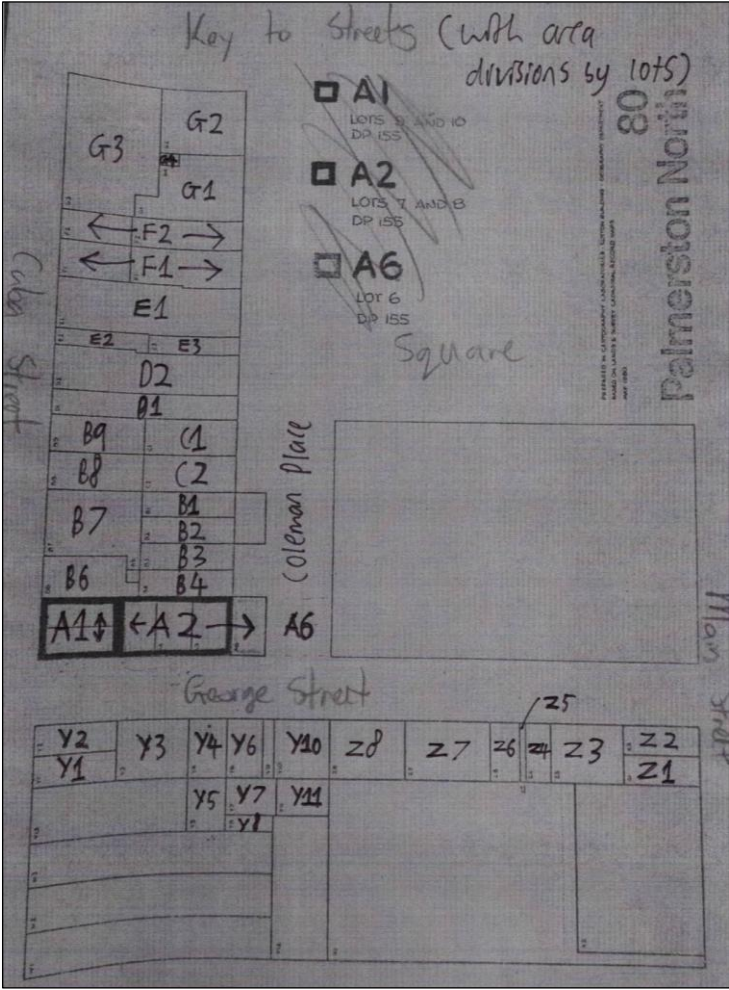


Image 13: An annotated Land Ownership Data printout, with properties identified in Coleman Place and surrounds.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁵ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data,” C1.

²⁰⁶ *Manawatu Times*, “Advertisements,” October 9, 1878, 3; *Manawatu Times*, “Advertisements,” October 12, 1878, 3.

²⁰⁷ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data prepared by students of Victoria University (1980).” Photograph of a diagram of Coleman Place and surrounds, printed out and annotated to help show the specific properties and boundaries in and around Coleman Place.

As previously stated, the larger of the two numberless property divisions bordering The Square, seen on the 1878 survey (Image 12), is believed to have included a road for access to C1 and C2, though this is not indicated on the survey nor apparent in the only photograph (Image 6) taken that year looking towards that part of the town.²⁰⁸ Robert Johnson “of Palmerston, Manawatu,” a tailor, occupied C1 until some point in the late 1870’s, having then transferred the section to Thomas Moffat, a butcher, “of PN.”²⁰⁹ Conversely, John Harris “of Palmerston North,” a settler, kept his property of C2 past the abolition of the reserve until 1889, having leased it to two other individuals over this period.²¹⁰ Further research would be required to understand why these particular properties were not included in the reserve land, especially for The Square portion of properties immediately bordering Coleman Place in D1 and D2 (as these were not recorded as being granted for private ownership until George Snelson came into ownership of both in 1881).²¹¹ Given that Palmerston North was still governed as part of the Wellington Province until 1877, it seems likely that the decision to subdivide these two properties from the reserve was not a local one.

The future George Street boundary for the area of Coleman Place on survey documents through this time is also not clear given the survey divisions. For the George Street facing properties of this block, it appears in later surveys that they were previously part of the ‘330’ block, according to a 1903 survey (Image 14) conducted by District Surveyor J. D. Climie, and not part of the ‘257’ reserve block of what became Coleman Place.²¹²

²⁰⁸ William James Harding, “Looking across The Square to the newly developing town,” 1878. Manawātū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/a1041521-3e89-46fe-ba54-d19c2e8f9213> (Accessed August 2, 2022).

²⁰⁹ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data,” C1.

²¹⁰ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data,” C2.

²¹¹ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data,” D1, D2.

²¹² Palmerston North City Council Archives, 7/6/9 Folder 3, “Standard Survey of Palmerston North, J.D. Climie 1903.”

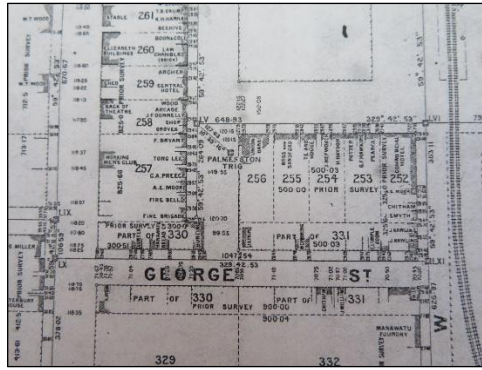


Image 14: Survey Map of Palmerston North 1903, zoomed into Coleman Place and the outer north west corner of The Square.²¹³

George Street, according to Bradfield, was constructed through to Cuba street from Main Street between 1875 and 1879 by the land owner and building contractor George F. Roe.²¹⁴ However, it appears from the Land Ownership Data that Roe only owned the adjacent ‘331’ Section ‘Z’ properties, having gained title to them in 1872, proceeding to transfer (likely selling) the subdivisions along his road to new owners over time.²¹⁵ Bradfield stated that George Street did not reach Cuba street until 1879,²¹⁶ by which stage the sections on the Coleman Place side of the street would have been separated from their previous block. Cross-checking the owners of the A1, A2, and A6 subdivisions, which occurred in 1879, with the properties across on George Street (‘Y’ properties), shows that this is what occurred. A note for the 1879 transfer of A1 stated it was now “part of town section 330 resurveyed and subdivided,” confirming this change.²¹⁷ Merchant brothers Jacob Joseph Nathan and Joseph Edward Nathan, from Wellington, had owned the nearby ‘331’ block from 1872, along with much of Cuba Street according to Brian Mather’s *Cuba Street*.²¹⁸ The following year ownership was transferred solely to Joseph Edward Nathan, with George Snelson later acquiring these ‘A’ properties from the subdivisions in 1879 when the road was reportedly completed.²¹⁹

²¹³ Palmerston North City Council Archives, 7/6/9 Folder 3, “Standard Survey of Palmerston North, J.D. Climie 1903.”

²¹⁴ Bradfield, *Forgotten Days*, 167.

²¹⁵ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data.”

²¹⁶ Bradfield, *Forgotten Days*, 167.

²¹⁷ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data,” A1.

²¹⁸ Mather, *Cuba Street*, 2.

²¹⁹ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data.”

Despite sharing a boundary between the two spaces, the eventual Coleman Place and George Street were closed off to each other on paper until 1887. This is because when Snelson acquired these grants in 1879, he transferred (likely sold) A6 to Samuel Dawick “of PN,” a Settler, in July that same year.²²⁰ This property was situated between the two areas, effectively preventing an access way through to The Square from George Street. According to Bradfield, the Borough Council recognised “the need to have the cul-de-sac joined up with George Street,” though it was not until the selling of a reserve in Rangitikei Street in December 1886 that the Council could purchase the property from Dawick.²²¹ Previous reporting from the *Manawatū Standard* confirms that the Council discussed “connecting George and Broad-streets through Coleman Place,” and had hoped to do so in late 1885.²²² Regardless, six and a half years later, A6 was transferred back to “The Mayor, Councillors & Burgesses of Borough of PN” in January 1887, becoming the access point between the former cul-de-sac and nearby road.²²³ Due to the disappointing fact that Coleman Place and this part of town did not become adequately photographed and documented until much later, it is only possible to speculate whether Dawick did anything with this land. Given Dawick’s other business ventures in the city,²²⁴ it seems likely the land remained unoccupied and was already serving as an unofficial public thoroughfare to The Square, as was the case with Sylvester Coleman’s time leasing the former reserve lands. Regardless, permanent and official access from George Street, through Coleman Place, to The Square occurred in 1887.

While the George Street facing properties are technically connected to Coleman Place’s block, given their official designation from this period onward, these will be largely ignored in respect to Coleman Place unless otherwise stated. The exception to this is a segment of A2, which extends into part of the reallocated A6 bought back by the Borough Council from Samuel Dawick in January 1887.²²⁵ Eventually, as the area became more established, segments of A2 became subdivided and leased to George Street facing addresses, while the corner property remained part of Coleman Place.²²⁶ Although it had a varied ownership

²²⁰ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data,” A6.

²²¹ Bradfield, *Forgotten Days*, 164.

²²² *Manawatū Standard*, “Borough Council,” August 21, 1885, 2.

²²³ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data,” A6.

²²⁴ Photographer Unknown, “Dawick’s Boarding House, Rangitikei Street,” 1882. Manawatū Heritage. <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/8e3cc3f8-c640-454e-9129-6dee7d14419d> (Accessed July 31, 2023).

²²⁵ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data,” A2, A6.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

history in the early development of Coleman Place, after 1923 A2 became firmly known as where the Hallenstein Brothers premise was located in Palmerston North.²²⁷

The other side of Coleman Place, on The Square's 256 block and what was 8 George Street (seen in the 1903 survey, Image 14), remained largely undeveloped in the decades leading to 1914. While the corner of The Square and Coleman Place had the previously noted surveyor's huts and trig station on it, presumably from the time of the early surveys, no other structures or developments appeared until the 1880's. Around March 1881, the Union Bank of Australia opened on the corner of The Square and Coleman Place,²²⁸ later being replaced in 1911 by the current two-story brick building after a fire destroyed the previous building.

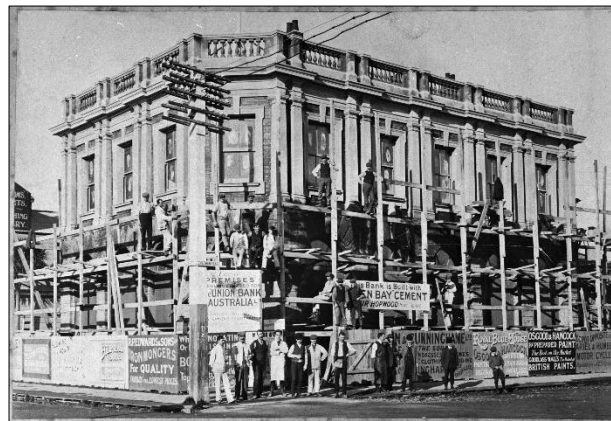


Image 15: Union Bank of Australia, on the corner of The Square and Coleman Place, during construction, circa 1910.²²⁹

On this same side of Coleman Place, on the other corner of George Street, a two-story residential house (seen partially on Image 16) developed sometime between the 1880's and 1914. Photographs indicate that the footpath access was on Coleman Place, despite the property being identified in survey maps as being 8 George Street.

²²⁷ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File "George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data," A2, A6.

²²⁸ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," March 5, 1881, 3.

²²⁹ F. W. Young, "Construction of Union Bank of Australia, The Square," c. 1910-11. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/112085cb-5cf8-4572-bfba-3fef05cdb556> (Accessed December 21, 2022).



Image 16: A view from George Street towards Coleman Place, showing a two-story house on one corner and other buildings (in the background) that have since been removed, circa 1908.²³⁰

Further research would be required to state definitively if there was later an in-between property between the bank and house as photographs only show some green space. A large tree, between the two spaces, later became fenced off after the bank's reconstruction (as seen in images 20, 21, 23). Given Sylvester Coleman's non-ownership of this side of the road, paired with a lack of visible development until after 1914, it seems highly probable that this side of the street was not considered as being part of the emerging Coleman Place until the intensification of commercial buildings past this period. While geographically the name designation tied both sides of the road together, their initial histories, visually and practically, despite classification of property records were different in the early days of Palmerston North.

While Cuba Street's properties directly behind Coleman Place have a similar history to tell, they are also outside the scope of this study unless otherwise stated. While there was a similar pattern of this part of Cuba Street, like Coleman Place, not being greatly utilised until the twentieth century, as identified by Mather,²³¹ eventually the properties connecting the two locations became better defined, with developments separating the properties from their shared area over time.

As a final point in identifying Coleman Place, it is worth noting that while it has clearly been identified as being a space connecting and existing alongside The Square, it does not technically extend beyond its boundaries despite this link. In some depictions of the space, there is some differential confusion of noting where Coleman Place begins or ends. In an

²³⁰ Photographer Unknown, "George Street entrance to C M Ross and Co," c. 1908. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/c982515a-4c01-4d60-ad43-a326d90bf74f> (Accessed August 10, 2022).

²³¹ Mather, *Cuba Street*, 2.

1895 survey (Image 1), Coleman Place appeared labelled as seemingly extending beyond its original ‘257’ block.²³² Later, a survey in 1924 labelled Coleman Place down the north western portion of The Square to Rangitikei Street.²³³ While both were probably printing to identify where Coleman Place was with too-large lettering, nothing appears to exist in other documents explored regarding Coleman Place about any official recognition or push to extend the boundaries of it into The Square’s existing ring-road within the city’s centre. Though the boundaries of a place do not necessarily contain everything about them, Coleman Place, as it existed from the beginnings of Palmerston North, was in this area – part of the wider town centre but distinct in its own right.

Coleman’s Place, Council’s Land

As previously stated in Sylvester Coleman’s biography in chapter one, Coleman’s name was bestowed upon this section of the early town due to his ownership of most of the land there. This may have also been in conjunction to recognising him as an important figure in the early years of the borough, though this is not explicitly stated. The exact details of his name being given to the area ultimately are not clear either due to a lack of primary, or secondary, sources explaining exactly when and why his name became synonymous with the area.

The land ownership records for Coleman Place and the adjacent streets confirm that Coleman had acquired many of the leases for land in the ‘257’ block after the Borough Council began leasing these properties in 1879. With the exception of B2, Coleman was the first person to be granted a lease for the properties of B1, B3, B4, B6, and B7, in October 1880.²³⁴ Again, with the exception of B2, each section was available for lease since their purported creation in October 1878, with the expectation they would be leased for 14 years.²³⁵ As previously noted, further research may clarify if the Borough Council had drawn up plans in 1878 to

²³² H. J. Wylde, Civil Engineer, Authorised and Licensed Surveyor, Palmerston North, “Plan of the Borough of Palmerston North District of Wellington, 1895,” 1895. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/b4bbc5b7-a555-49a6-992c-1c2a6c40710b> (Accessed December 1, 2022).

²³³ H. R. Farquhar, “Plan of the Borough of Palmerston North Divided into Blocks for Easy Reference,” 1924. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/ddbf7644-3406-47ef-a434-3d6e748812d4> (Accessed January 11, 2023).

²³⁴ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data,” B1, B3, B4, B6, B7.

²³⁵ *Manawatu Times*, “Untitled,” October 9, 1878, 2.

subdivide the reserve for lease, although such records existing seems unlikely. Regardless, Coleman later acquired the lease of B2 in February 1881 from John Powell, who had been leasing it from the Council since January 1880.²³⁶

Coleman's collection of leases may have been influenced by the immediate proximity of a personal property located on A1, the corner of George Street and Cuba Street. After George Snelson had title to this section in 1879, the Land Ownership Data noted that it was split into two lots and then transferred that same year to Sylvester Coleman "Commission Agent."²³⁷ No sources of any kind indicate what the property had on it, if anything, but later transfers after his death in December 1881 indicate that it was probably a family home. While this is not certain given the next owner listed was unrelated to the family (William John Batt in 1882), it seems highly likely given that Coleman's wife, Margaret Frances Coleman, took back ownership of A1 that same year.²³⁸ It was subsequently in family hands until 1893 when she died at Wellington, with the property in a state of "transmission" being given to the Coleman's oldest daughter, Victoria Margaret Von Sturmer.²³⁹ Interestingly, Margaret Frances' will mentioned nothing specifically about a family property, though this may be explained by her occupation in Wellington.²⁴⁰ The following year A1 was sold to Ann Tanner of Wellington, who held it until 1900.²⁴¹

Despite Sylvester Coleman's renown in Palmerston North, it is not immediately obvious from sources when and why his name became attached to this area, or what he had on his land. As previously noted, the pre-existing street designation for Coleman Place was called Corporation Street.²⁴² Newspaper advertisements on November 17, 1880, indicate that Coleman "vacated his old premises... to his new Sale Rooms in Coleman Place,"²⁴³ indicating that his name might have replaced this designation when he leased the five blocks from the Borough Council. As the Council's records from this time are missing and secondary sources say nothing about this change, it is impossible to confirm when or if this occurred in this presumed way. What is certain is that Coleman's name was used to refer to this area of Palmerston North while he was alive, likely in a similar way to nearby George

²³⁶ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File "George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data," B2.

²³⁷ Ibid, A1.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Wellington High Court, "Margaret Frances Coleman Will."

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² *Manawatu Times*, "Untitled," October 9, 1878, 2.

²⁴³ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," November 17, 1880, 2; *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," December 8, 1880, 4.

Street's naming being derived from its creator, George F. Roe. Notices appearing in the *Manawatu Times* periodically, over at least six months, repeated Coleman's move to his place,²⁴⁴ with his own advertisement for his services stating his "New Auction Rooms and Land Office" were now at "Coleman Place, The Square, Palmerston North."²⁴⁵ The extent of his physical business premise in Coleman Place is hard to evaluate given a lack of photographic or written evidence describing this part of town during his years there. At the very least, some building serving as an office and/or auction room would have been used at his premises.

Despite this ambiguity, there are some clues as to what the property might have looked like. As previously stated, Coleman once took leave from a Council meeting, in May 1881, "to erect a sign-board across the pathway at his business premises in Coleman Place".²⁴⁶ This suggests that his business must have fronted or have primarily been accessed via Coleman Place given this signage. Considering the relative size of the combined properties, two later mentions of Coleman Place make more sense too. Petersen's note that "Coleman set up a small crushing plant behind his store in The Square," both fits the timing of Coleman's relocation to Coleman Place, at the end of 1880 when "Palmerston North had its gold strike thrill," and the amount of space needed to set up such a device.²⁴⁷ Later, a newspaper notice, not long before Coleman's death, gave warning to people using his land as "a thoroughfare" not to damage fences,²⁴⁸ indicating that some portion, perhaps most of his land, was meant to be closed off from street access. Given this, it can be presumed that he allowed some portion of his property, that was not fenced off, to be used as an unofficial thoroughfare between Cuba Street and The Square, likely in keeping with his attitude to serve the community. Regardless, it is clear from various newspaper advertisements that Coleman utilised his business premises for his various ventures, likely living in his adjoined property (which he owned outright), and became attached to this place in name due to his taking of the leases in the early years of the borough.

²⁴⁴ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," May 11, 1881, 1.

²⁴⁵ *Manawatu Herald*, "Advertisements," August 16, 1881, 1.

²⁴⁶ *Manawatu Times*, "Palmerston Borough Council," May 7, 1881, 2.

²⁴⁷ Petersen, *Pioneering Days*, 96-97.

²⁴⁸ *Manawatu Times*, "News and Notes," December 14, 1881, 2.

Coleman Place to The Great War

Following Sylvester Coleman's death, his leased properties were redistributed to three business partners between August 1882 and June 1886.²⁴⁹ John Christian Richter, Jacob Nannestad, and Frith Jenssen, took over the leases and were known for their timber and milling business within the area. Interestingly, it appears from some advertisements that "Richter, Nannestad, & Co.," also had other ventures like Coleman before them, lending money and selling property.²⁵⁰ Because there are no photographs of Coleman Place during their lease of it, it is difficult to conclude whether any alterations to the previous structures were made. Why they only held the leases until 1886 is not immediately clear either, though at a Borough Council meeting in September 1885 the company had offered "a site in Coleman Place as desirable for the erection of suitable Corporation buildings."²⁵¹ This was later discussed by a Borough Council committee on January 5, 1886, which noted that the Council would ask the company to "have the 33 feet in Coleman Place that part upon which our building is erected."²⁵² If the Land Ownership Data is correct, this contradiction of the Council already having a property in Coleman Place, before the leases end, would be explained by the company's earlier offer of having transferred the lease of B6 in January to the Council.²⁵³ Nearly a week after the Council's request, the company replied. The committee minutes noted on January 11 that they had offered "the section in Coleman Place unoccupied for the sums of £10," though the Council needed to "ascertain on what terms... the purchase including the building could be obtained."²⁵⁴ In April 1886 it appeared that the remaining leases had been agreed upon to be given back to the Council, as the Public Works Committee on April 16 noted that "Instructions were given for plan of... alterations... to the building in Coleman Place to make it suitable for Council Chambers + library."²⁵⁵ The following month the *Manawatū Standard* reported that the Council was searching for "alternative tenders... for the alteration in the Council offices in Coleman Place so as to add a

²⁴⁹ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File "George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data."

²⁵⁰ *Manawatu Times*, "District Court.," May 25, 1889, 2; *Manawatū Standard*, "Advertisements," May 15, 1886, 4.

²⁵¹ *Manawatū Standard*, "Borough Council.," September 10, 1885, 2.

²⁵² Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2, "Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 29 January 1878 - 13 January 1888."

²⁵³ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File "George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data," B6.

²⁵⁴ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2, "Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 29 January 1878 - 13 January 1888."

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

book room and Town Clerk's office," confirming that the Council was intent on moving to and having a presence at Coleman Place.²⁵⁶ Due to both a lack of detailed visual and written evidence of Coleman Place during the late 1880's and 1890's, little can be said about it during this period other than its use for some Council offices. For the bulk of land originally in Sylvester Coleman's possession, most of it was not available for lease again until the following century. However, from a survey plan thought to have been drawn up in 1893 (Image 4), the Borough Council appeared to have considered leasing out Coleman Place over this period.²⁵⁷ Exactly why these plans did not eventuate is unknown, with this likely to remain a mystery due to missing sources. Later, Bradfield claimed in *Forgotten Days* that Coleman Place was suggested as a potential site for Palmerston North's opera house in 1901, though this building was ultimately constructed on the corner of Ashley Street and Church Street, near the south eastern corner of The Square.²⁵⁸

This public ownership development in Coleman Place unexpectedly led to the creation of Palmerston North's first fire station in the late 1880's. Gordon Kear's *A Century of Service: A History of the Palmerston North Fire Brigade 1883-1983* detailed that the emergence of the fire station was seemingly unplanned. According to Kear, in 1888 "the provision of headquarters became urgent and a decision was reached to make a site available in Coleman Place," with the Council reportedly helping to fund the construction of a "single story" building.²⁵⁹ Prior to this, the volunteer fire brigade had no proper home in town, perhaps owing to earlier troubles in forming and managing the service.²⁶⁰ Fortunately, as the Council had regained the leases in Coleman Place for its own facilities, this conveniently allowed for this important service to be housed there. Kear asserted, however, that it was mainly "fund raising by the brigade itself and donations from business houses seeking greater fire protection" that allowed for the construction of their building.²⁶¹ Whenever it was completed, presumably in early 1889 (sources do not specifically state a date), the fire alarm bell, then located on The Square's railway water tower, was eventually moved to the tower constructed next to the fire station in May 1890.²⁶² The structure, which remained the tallest construction in Coleman Place until about the First World War, was initially deemed an "insufficient

²⁵⁶ *Manawatū Standard*, "Borough Council.," May 6, 1886, 4.

²⁵⁷ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 7/6/16:1:1, "Borough Reserves Subdivision and Lease."

²⁵⁸ Bradfield, *Forgotten Days*, 77.

²⁵⁹ Gordon Kear, *A Century of Service: A History of the Palmerston North Fire Brigade 1883-1983* (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1983), 17.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 14-16; Petersen, *Centennial History*, 130-132.

²⁶¹ Kear, *Palmerston North Fire Brigade*, 17.

²⁶² *Ibid*, 18.

height” until later in 1890 when Council funds lengthened the tower, whose “bell was activated by water pressure and controlled by a tap at ground level.”²⁶³

A few years later in 1893, the fire station was renovated with an additional second floor which ended up serving as a library.²⁶⁴ According to former city librarian Ian Malcolm in *Palmerston North City Library, 1879 to 1979*, with the town’s library collection destroyed in the August 1885 town hall fire and subsequent troubles, a private library under the Palmerston North Working Men’s Club gained the remaining book collection.²⁶⁵ Initially lending only to its members, the club established its library above the brigade in 1893, soon opening up “honorary” memberships to the public for “an annual subscription of £1,” proving to be popular with “210 ‘honorary members’ in 1894.”²⁶⁶ While previously the Borough Council debated and decided against a public library in Coleman Place due to costs, Malcolm implied through “the Fire Brigade” library’s success that this spurred the Council towards funding and creating a dedicated facility elsewhere.²⁶⁷ The fate of the library at Coleman Place, which the Borough Council had a slight stake in given that it housed some Council owned books in its collection, was decided in 1910 when the fire brigade moved that year.²⁶⁸ Specifically, the brigade “decided to close its circulating library from Saturday, April 2,” as the new station had no room for any library.²⁶⁹ The fire brigade in the years prior had become governed by a ‘Fire Board,’ formed under the Fire Brigades Act 1906, which meant that the Borough Council no longer controlled its assets.²⁷⁰ While it was discussed by the Council that the fire brigade could move its existing facilities across to a nearby Cuba Street section for financial savings, the Fire Board declined stating that it was “rotten and worm-eated [sic] in many places and likely to fall to pieces if lifted off its piles.”²⁷¹ Part of the hope that they might have agreed to this must have been rooted in the Council’s desire and plans to relocate the public library service to Coleman Place.²⁷² This was later put to a public poll in 1910 in order to decide if “a loan of £5000 shall be raised for the purpose of erecting a Public Library and Museum on part Section 257, Coleman Place and Cuba Street.”²⁷³ While the *Manawatu*

²⁶³ Kear, *Palmerston North Fire Brigade*, 18.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 17.

²⁶⁵ Ian W. Malcolm, *Palmerston North City Library, 1879 to 1979* (Palmerston North: Palmerston North Public Library, 1979), 7-8.

²⁶⁶ Kear, *Palmerston North Fire Brigade*, 18-19.

²⁶⁷ Malcolm, *Palmerston North City Library*, 8-11.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 12.

²⁶⁹ *Manawatu Times*, “Prohibition Orders.,” March 23, 1910, 4.

²⁷⁰ Kear, *Palmerston North Fire Brigade*, 21.

²⁷¹ *Ibid*, 23.

²⁷² *Manawatu Standard*, “Topics of the Day,” October 8, 1910, 4.

²⁷³ *Manawatu Times*, “Advertisements,” October 15, 1910, 1.

Times recognised the apparent need for a new library in the vacant space, despite it commenting “we do not think it is the best site by any means, but it has a strong backing,”²⁷⁴ the poll was rejected in October by the public who voted 238 against and 232 for.²⁷⁵ As noted by the *Manawatū Standard*, turnout was “the most apathetic display of voting on record locally,”²⁷⁶ with 35.4% of eligible votes cast.²⁷⁷

It is not clear from sources what happened afterwards to the old fire station within this period. Shortly after the poll failed, there was a suggestion to move it towards Cuba Street so the Philosophical Society could utilise it as a “museum.”²⁷⁸ From photographs, it is not immediately clear whether this occurred or if the new lease owner in August 1912, Arthur Hopwood Hardware Company Ltd., used or demolished the structures.²⁷⁹ An article in the *Manawatū Journal of History* by Fiona McKergow, regarding the history of the Philosophical Society, asserted that it was indeed moved back to Cuba Street, with a later building looking reminiscent of the former fire station seen in photographs.²⁸⁰ Additionally, Mather’s *Cuba Street* claimed that a new premise was built on the site in 1913, later demolished in 1996, which would explain why more recent heritage building catalogues of Palmerston North say nothing of this historic site.²⁸¹

²⁷⁴ *Manawatu Times*, “To-Night’s Meeting,” October 7, 1910, 4.

²⁷⁵ Palmerston North Community Archives, A175/51, “Loan Polls, 1878-1973,” 8.

²⁷⁶ *Manawatū Standard*, “Topics of the Day,” October 22, 1910, 4.

²⁷⁷ Palmerston North Community Archives, A175/51, “Loan Polls, 1878-1973,” 8.

²⁷⁸ *Manawatu Times*, “The Museum,” November 17, 1910, 4.

²⁷⁹ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data,” B4.

²⁸⁰ Fiona McKergow, “Veteran Curator: Charles Hirtzel and The Manawatu Philosophical Society Museum,” *Manawatū Journal of History* 5 (2009): 21.

²⁸¹ Mather, *Cuba Street*, 6.



Image 17: The Palmerston North Fire Brigade Station and Working Men's Library building in Coleman Place, next to the bell tower, 1901.²⁸²

While the Council's ownership of the land in Coleman Place consolidated it for municipal use, the C1 and C2 properties kept it from being a completely publicly owned and used space. Between the 1880's and 1910's, the two properties remained in private ownership until C2 was transferred back to the Council in 1912.²⁸³ C2 had been transferred to new owners four times over this period, one of which occurred due to a mortgage debt, with regular lease transfers occurring throughout these decades by its various owners.²⁸⁴ While there is the possibility, due to a lack of sources detailing what occupied this property in the early years, that it may have been used as a residence, it is more likely, as later pictures and advertisements show, that C2 was used for commercial purposes. This is evidenced by the development of J. A. Nash & Co. in 1906, whose goods store not only fronted Coleman Place

²⁸² Photographer Unknown, "Palmerston North Volunteer Fire Brigade," 1901. Manawātū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/6d2d7741-403b-43cd-a939-0fd0abbe53be> (Accessed August 2, 2023).

²⁸³ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File "George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data," C2.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

but extended through to Cuba Street.²⁸⁵ Mather described the building, built in 1905, as an “amalgamation” of the future Mayor and Member of Parliament’s business relationships.²⁸⁶ The *Manawatū Standard* heralded the “commodious two-storeyed brick structure,” opened by Mayor Maurice Cohen, as “a credit to the town, and one of which Palmerston may well be proud.”²⁸⁷

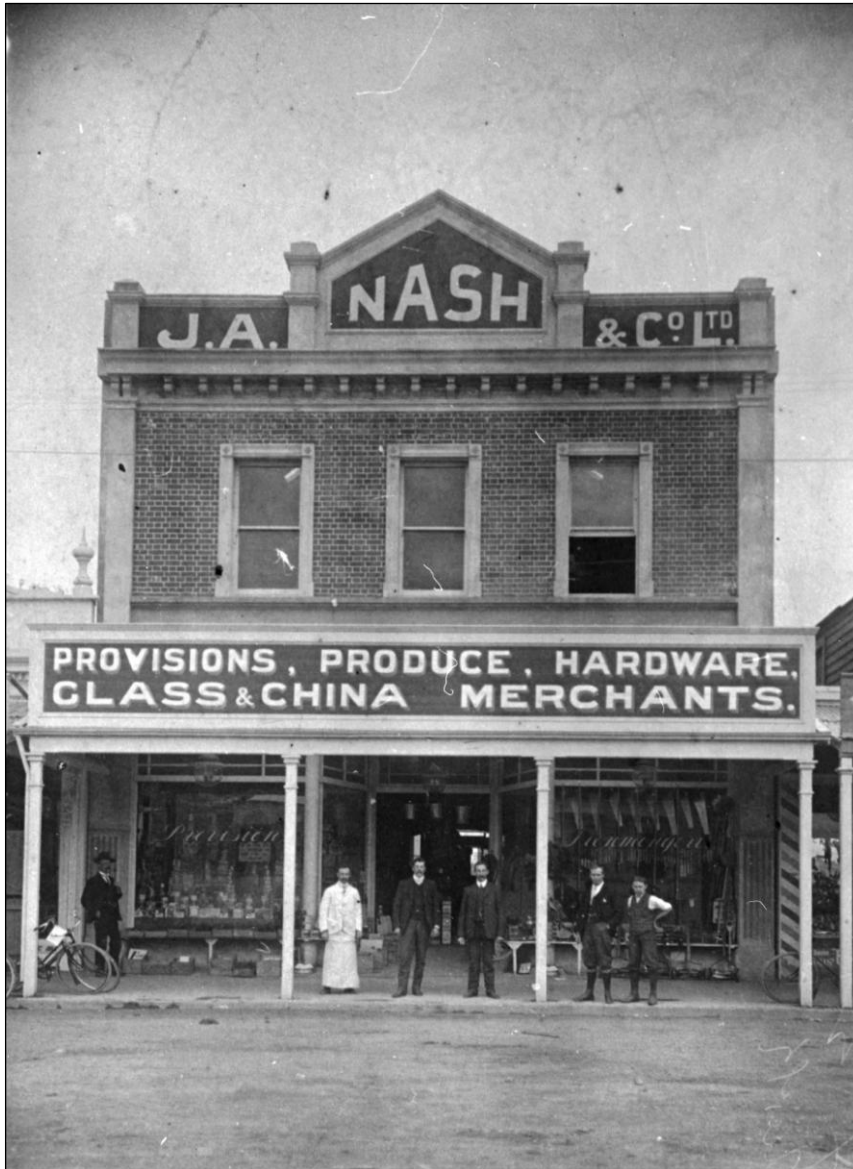


Image 18: The James A. Nash and Company building in Coleman Place, 1906.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data,” C2, B8.

²⁸⁶ Mather, *Cuba Street*, 3.

²⁸⁷ *Manawatū Standard*, “J. A Nash and Co., Ltd.,” June 7, 1906, 7.

²⁸⁸ Photographer Unknown, ‘J.A. Nash & Co. Ltd, Coleman Place,’ c. 1906. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/cfa1b20b-bce5-401c-8fc0-b839ad7edfa3> (Accessed August 2, 2022).

While the property would come back to the Council's hands some years later, the regular transferral of lease arrangements during this period demonstrates that Coleman Place's commercial pull had properly established itself in the twentieth century.

C1, conversely, had a less varied property history. It remained in the possession of John James Waldegrave and his family between 1880 to 1955, only ever being leased twice between 1883 to 1891.²⁸⁹ John James Waldegrave, a borough councillor in 1886,²⁹⁰ was noted by newspapers in the early 1880's as having offices built around The Square, although it is unclear whether this referred to the emergence of his property at Coleman Place.²⁹¹ In September 1881, the *Manawatu Times* commented how the construction of a new building by Waldegrave was considered "premature" for the town's size, though the paper commented that "Mr. Waldegrave was right... he has had two or three offers for its occupation."²⁹² According to information in a 2010 Palmerston North City Council heritage building inventory, it seems unlikely that offices were the primary use at Waldegrave's Coleman Place building as independent butchers, a property developer, and other commercial outlets operated here during this early period.²⁹³ Later, the original building on C1, like all the buildings in nineteenth century Coleman Place, was eventually replaced in the following century.²⁹⁴

Coleman Place's street layout had remained largely unchanged throughout its initial development into the early twentieth century. At some point in this period, the road surface had become sealed, alongside sections of the inner town, as evidenced by photographs of this time. Matheson stated that by 1896 Palmerston North had all streets "metalled," although photographs show that they must have been frequently resealed due to wear and damage.²⁹⁵ Earlier, power poles appeared around The Square, with Coleman Place receiving access to electricity around 1893 as evidenced in photographs. Unfortunately, while there are some sources that discuss the origins of electricity in Palmerston North, such as Petersen's *Centennial History* and Russell Poole's chapter in *City at the Centre*,²⁹⁶ none go into extensive detail about how the electrification efforts affected locations like Coleman Place.

²⁸⁹ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File "George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data prepared by students of Victoria University (1980)," C1.

²⁹⁰ Matheson, *Council and Community*, 98; *Manawatu Standard*, "Borough Council.," May 6, 1886, 4.

²⁹¹ *Manawatu Herald*, "Advertisements," January 2, 1880, 1.

²⁹² *Manawatu Times*, "News and Notes.," September 3, 1881, 2.

²⁹³ Palmerston North City Council Archives, A175/19/2, "Proposed North West Square Heritage Area and Buildings for Individual Listing," 53.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 52.

²⁹⁵ Matheson, *Council and Community*, 17.

²⁹⁶ Petersen, *Centennial History*, 158-159; Poole, "Building the City," 118-120.

Later, much like the rest of the inner city, overhead power lines disappeared past the 1920's. Additionally, it is not clear from when the town's drainage and water systems were installed to what impact this had on Coleman Place. Given that these collective improvements occurred in the last decade of the nineteenth century for the rest of Palmerston North, Coleman Place would enjoy the benefits of these utilities or infrastructures in the following century.



Image 19: A view of The Square taken towards Coleman Place, 1912.²⁹⁷

Given the property developments of this period, it is interesting to note that a poll for the widening of the entrance way between Coleman Place and George Street failed in 1913. The proposal, announced by Mayor James Nash in early June,²⁹⁸ was to buy back the protruding A2 property and move the footpath in line with the rest of the street at the cost of £3500.²⁹⁹ Prior to this, the Council had been in a showdown with an American company, Harvester Co., about their use of their lease of A2 for alterations and use of the building on the site as a workshop.³⁰⁰ Like the previous ratepayer poll regarding Coleman Place, it failed with 415

²⁹⁷ Chas Allen, "View of the Western side of the Square," c. 1910. Manawātū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/f390bc94-ac00-405c-8bef-e0ba20b932b9> (Accessed August 10, 2023).

²⁹⁸ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," June 5, 1913, 1.

²⁹⁹ Palmerston North Community Archives, A175/51, "Loan Polls, 1878-1973," 10.

³⁰⁰ Palmerston North City Council Archives, A175/19/2, "Proposed North West Square Heritage Area and Buildings for Individual Listing," 18-22.

nays against 171 for.³⁰¹ Thus, by the end of this period before the First World War, Coleman Place had reverted back to a commercial space with the Council maintaining leases over the properties there.

Unknown Space to Gathering Place



Image 20: A parade of butchers coming from Coleman Place, circa 1912. Note also the presence of power poles and the Manawatu Stables (on the distant right).³⁰²

Coleman Place in Palmerston North's early development had effectively been used as a thoroughfare, inadvertently created by the placement of Palmerston North's centre. By the twentieth century it had transformed to take on a similar function to that of the growing businesses surrounding The Square. Despite these functions, Coleman Place became a place where, on some occasions, commerce co-existed with the assembly and meeting of people.

³⁰¹ Palmerston North Community Archives, A175/51, "Loan Polls, 1878-1973," 10.

³⁰² Charles Allen, "Butcher's procession, corner of The Square and Coleman Place," c. 1912. Manawātū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/707801b3-7410-40dd-a9b7-6baa95a08c1d> (Accessed August 17, 2023).

Coleman Place, on account of its location and wide street layout, despite the narrowing entrance to George Street, was able to be used as a gathering place because it was already considered a thoroughfare and attached to Palmerston North's centre. The street's eventual connection to George Street not only added to Coleman Place's significance as a connector to the north western area of the town, but increased its importance as a through space with the addition of the nearby Manawatu Stables in George Street. Looking through Coleman Place to The Square, the stables undoubtedly had an impact on the amount of people visiting this part of Palmerston North. However, to what degree this impacted Coleman Place's usage as a space, or its use as a gathering place, is difficult to evaluate without further investigation. While use of Coleman Place's properties were reverting back to commercial usage, it was a space in which meetings and events occurred. While the fire station was based in Coleman Place, it was once a poll location for the public to vote in the 1907 borough elections.³⁰³ Given the placement of an important public service, other meetings were also held there while the service was based at Coleman Place.³⁰⁴

A dominant use of the Coleman Place during this era was for the assembling of groups prior to their departure elsewhere. While it is difficult to pinpoint when parades around The Square began to take place, Coleman Place's uniqueness in being a connecting location between two areas of Palmerston North lent itself well as a beginning and ending point of such events. This was true in the commemoration of Queen Victoria's rule in 1897, when celebrations and a procession to the Esplanade's opening began at The Square and Coleman Place.³⁰⁵ Specifically, the *Manawatū Standard* highlighted that Coleman Place was where school children assembled in colonial colours, apparently making it the place where "the greatest activity and interest centred."³⁰⁶

At least from the twentieth century onwards, Coleman Place began to be mentioned in newspaper advertisements as a location where groups would meet in order to parade. On January 28, 1901, the Manawatu Cycling Club, Palmerston North Rifle Volunteers, and Manawatu Mounted Rifles, had planned to assembled there between 10am and 11am in order to take part in a church parade for a "Memorial Service for late Queen Victoria at All Saints' Church."³⁰⁷ For the Palmerston North Rifle Volunteers, Coleman Place became a regular

³⁰³ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," April 22, 1907, 8.

³⁰⁴ *Manawatū Standard*, "Advertisements," July 15, 1901, 3.

³⁰⁵ *Manawatū Standard*, "The Record Reign.," June 23, 1897, 2.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," January 26, 1901, 3.

assembly point in the 1900's, though it appears only for a regular afternoon "church parade."³⁰⁸ Similarly, the Palmerston Guards also assembled in Coleman Place during these years for the same purpose.³⁰⁹

For official occasions, the May 1905 celebration of Empire Day had involved a parade from Coleman Place including "mounted and three infantry corps, the two local bands, and Fire Brigade."³¹⁰ The celebration of Empire Day continued in the following years, with annual parades of such groups gathering at Coleman Place before going to All Saints Church (located opposite the south west corner of The Square).³¹¹ Later, the celebration of Dominion Day was noted by the *Manawatu Times*, in September 1910, as apparently being the largest parade in town since "the Boer war."³¹² Unsurprisingly, "volunteers and school cadets assembled at Coleman Place" and went on to march around The Square until stopping at the centre.³¹³ Earlier in 1910, similar groups had met at Coleman Place to prepare a parade for the funeral for King Edward VII.³¹⁴ Two years later in 1912, with celebrations of King George V's birthday in June, a "corps" with a band met at Coleman Place, in the morning, to march around The Square.³¹⁵ The *Manawatu Times* reported that a planned afternoon volunteer parade to "the Sportsground" was abandoned "because of the wet," but noted activities in the centre of town had gone ahead, perhaps owing to the lesser impact weather might have had on the roads at Coleman Place and The Square.³¹⁶ In 1914, when the weather was "threatening... a heavy gale" on King's Birthday celebrations, the assembled "Territorials" marched from Coleman Place to the Showgrounds, despite the poor conditions that hindered celebrations years prior.³¹⁷

After war was declared the following month, Coleman Place became an assembly point for the marching of an Indian battalion and a "Monster Demonstration" for the recruitment of men to go fight.³¹⁸ The reserve and associated church parades continued throughout the war years. When an announcement was expected regarding the end of the war in November,

³⁰⁸ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," May 11, 1901, 3; *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," May 22, 1905, 1.

³⁰⁹ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," May 21, 1903, 3.

³¹⁰ *Manawatu Times*, "Service for Men.," May 22, 1901, 3.

³¹¹ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," May 22, 1909, 1.

³¹² *Manawatu Times*, "Dominion Day.," September 27, 1910, 7.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," May 13, 1910, 1-5.

³¹⁵ *Manawatu Times*, "King's Birthday.," June 4, 1912, 5.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*

³¹⁷ *Manawatu Times*, "King's Birthday Celebrations.," June 4, 1914, 3.

³¹⁸ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," 10 October, 1914, 1; *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," December 10, 1914, 8.

1918, the *Manawatu Times* reported, amongst other proceedings, that for two days of celebrations the processions would commence from Coleman Place to around The Square.³¹⁹ In 1919, with the official end of World War One, celebrations in July of a “Children’s Day, Parade and Sports” began at Coleman Place with a vehicle parade around town including “about 60 [cars]... every car contained a load of cheering and shouting children waving their flags and hugely enjoying themselves.”³²⁰



Image 21: The 6th Manawatu Mounted Rifle regiment assembling to march from Coleman Place, 1915. Note also the recently constructed CM Ross building in the top right quadrant.³²¹

After World War One, Coleman Place’s significance as a gathering place gradually faded. While it continued in a similar tradition of being an assembly space for returned soldiers,³²²

³¹⁹ *Manawatu Times*, “Peace Arrangements,” November 12, 1918, 5.

³²⁰ *Manawatu Times*, “Peace Celebrations.,” July 22, 1919, 7.

³²¹ Charles Allen, “6th Manawatu Mounted Rifles Regiment Parade,” c. 1915. Manawātū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/ed47e707-90ea-4f67-a441-0eea33497055> (Accessed February 9, 2023).

³²² *Manawatu Times*, “Advertisements,” April 23, 1921, 1.

cadets,³²³ church parades,³²⁴ and at times for friendly societies and other gatherings,³²⁵ the growth of Palmerston North and replacement of horses with auto-mobiles meant that Coleman Place was less suited for gatherings in the following decades. According to the available articles printed during this period by the *Manawatu Times*, Coleman Place was once used as an assembly point for 1928's Armistice Day,³²⁶ and at least annually for the July "All Saints' Men's Club" services up until 1932.³²⁷ While Coleman Place's importance as a gathering place diminished over time, this does not take away the significance it had as a place where regular assemblies gathered to go together around Palmerston North.



Image 22: Returned servicemen gather at Coleman Place for the annual Wellington Regiment church parade, April 30, 1933.³²⁸

³²³ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," May 28, 1921, 1.

³²⁴ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," October 20, 1923, 1.

³²⁵ *Manawatu Times*, "Queen Carnival," October 2, 1924, 5.

³²⁶ *Manawatu Times*, "Armistice Day," November 10, 1928, 6.

³²⁷ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," July 30, 1932, 1.

³²⁸ S.C. Smith, Wellington, "Wellington Regiment Church Parade, Coleman Place," April 30, 1933. Manawatu Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/ffdd51e0-14a8-48d0-a91e-52d09aebeef9> (Accessed March 9, 2023).

From Wartime to the 1960's

Despite the outbreak of the First World War, Coleman Place, like the rest of Palmerston North, continued its development and solidification of its use as a commercial and retail space. While new buildings had been constructed in the existing properties of Coleman Place before this period, two new buildings on the 'bank side' emerged during this time.

The first, the Charles Macintosh Ross building (which will hereafter be referred to as the CM Ross building), on the opposite corner of George Street and Coleman Place, was an extension of the existing business that was constructed on The Square. According to the 2010 Palmerston North City Council heritage building inventory, this section had entered into the company's hands in late 1914, with the house on it being removed in early 1915.³²⁹ The facade of the building, which has remained largely identical through to the twenty-first century, displays that it was constructed in 1915. However in April 1916, the department store was noted by the *Manawatū Standard* as having completed its renovations, inviting the public to see their new store.³³⁰ According to further information about the premises, it housed a showroom on the bottom floor and initially a tearoom on the first floor.³³¹ While useful as a resting space for shoppers and a function room for occasions, according to former city archivist Lesley Courtney, the tearoom was not successful enough to keep it there and was moved into the main CM Ross building in 1928.³³² The space was then used for 52 years as the home of the Manawatu County Club, a woman's social club that formed in response to the need of a space where women, particularly from the countryside, could meet and socialise when they came into town for various reasons.³³³ Ownership records thereafter indicate that the building was transferred to Milne and Choyce in 1959, later becoming part of the D.I.C. department store complex in 1966.³³⁴ Additionally, several other businesses, such as dentists Williams and McKegg, were noted to have occupied a space throughout these decades to at least 1960, although more research would be needed to clarify these details.³³⁵

³²⁹ Palmerston North City Council Archives, A175/19/2, "Proposed North West Square Heritage Area and Buildings for Individual Listing," 30.

³³⁰ Ibid, 30-32; *Manawatū Standard*, "The C. M. Ross Co., Ltd.," April 19, 1916, 6.

³³¹ Palmerston North City Council Archives, A175/19/2, "Proposed North West Square Heritage Area and Buildings for Individual Listing," 32.

³³² Ibid; Lesley Courtney, *The House That Quality and Value Built: The C. M. Ross Co. Ltd Story* (Palmerston North: Palmerston North City Library, 2008), 8-14.

³³³ Palmerston North City Council Archives, A175/19/2, "Proposed North West Square Heritage Area and Buildings for Individual Listing," 32-33.

³³⁴ Ibid, 33.

³³⁵ Ibid, 35.



Image 23: CM Ross building on the corner of George Street and Coleman Place, which connected to their main premises on The Square, circa 1915/1916.³³⁶

The second building, Norfolk House, between the bank and department store extension, was constructed in 1925 as part of the CM Ross complex.³³⁷ Its name came later from the acquisition of the property by Norwich Union Life Insurance Society in 1964, which originally started “in the English county of Norfolk.”³³⁸ While there were two previous owners after the CM Ross company sold the building in 1933, the building became known as Norfolk House as past photographs and descriptions did not identify any other name on its facade prior to this acquisition.³³⁹ This was likely due to its use as a building unconnected to the CM Ross department store, as “it was intended to be leased out to commercial tenants,

³³⁶ Whalley and Co. Crown Studios, “C M Ross Department Store, Coleman Place,” c. 1915/1916. Manawatu Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/4db749b8-31ae-4b09-9b48-26fc5f7ea594> (Accessed February 9, 2023).

³³⁷ Palmerston North City Council Archives, A175/19/2, “Proposed North West Square Heritage Area and Buildings for Individual Listing,” 37-38.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 39.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

rather than become part of the main department store.”³⁴⁰ According to the 2010 Palmerston North City Council heritage building inventory, Norfolk House, along with the CM Ross building on the corner, had the same street number for many years, as the occupants “all used the same street access.”³⁴¹ This has led to confusion about who occupied the space until later in the century, as sources like the Wises directories did not typically distinguish between shared units or who was on a specific floor.³⁴² As some information from the 1930’s to the 1950’s reveals, there were a variety of retailers in this section of Coleman Place operating at one point or another, including providers of stationary, podiatry, a salon, jewellers and watchers, florists, and a beauty specialist.³⁴³ Again, specifics about who was in which unit would require deeper research. It is worth noting also that with these changes part of the Union Bank of Australia building was later renovated within this era to accommodate more retail space too.³⁴⁴

³⁴⁰ Palmerston North City Council Archives, A175/19/2, “Proposed North West Square Heritage Area and Buildings for Individual Listing,” 38; Courtney, *The House That Value and Quality Built*, 12.

³⁴¹ Palmerston North City Council Archives, A175/19/2, “Proposed North West Square Heritage Area and Buildings for Individual Listing,” 39-40.

³⁴² Ibid. Wise’s New Zealand Post Office directories were national publications that attempted to list people and businesses across postal areas in New Zealand, from the late nineteenth century to mid twentieth century. Although somewhat useful in placing local details to areas, about who was where in an area, this information was not always accurate as noted by Bowman and Burr. This is especially true in earlier volumes which made no distinction about what businesses were located on which streets in Palmerston North, simply listing them all as belonging to Palmerston North as an area.

³⁴³ Ibid, 40.

³⁴⁴ Palmerston North City Council Archives, A175/19, “Palmerston North CBD Heritage Inventory,” 63.



Image 24: Photograph taken from George Street looking at the CM Ross buildings on Coleman Place, with what later became known as Norfolk House on the left of the CM Ross building, circa 1930's.³⁴⁵

Apart from Norfolk House, no original structures that were first erected on Coleman Place remain to the present day. In late February 1924, a fire destroyed four shops and damaged two on the other side of Coleman Place leaving “a blackened gap right through to Cuba Street.”³⁴⁶ This, along with previous and later demolitions of sections on this side have meant that Coleman Place’s only original feature to survive to the present day is the narrow entrance to George Street. Incidentally, the *Manawatu Times* in 1953 reported that the City Council had to declare George Street a public thoroughfare after “the Lands and Survey Department had no record of George Street being a public street.”³⁴⁷ While this did not stop public access to it or affect Coleman Place, it is interesting to note that while practically nothing of the

³⁴⁵ Photographer Unknown, “C M Ross Co Ltd buildings,” c. 1930s. Manawātū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/7a6c4ab1-50e4-4895-8dff-d62e60b41c93> (Accessed July 19, 2023).

³⁴⁶ Bradfield, *Forgotten Days*, 49.

³⁴⁷ *Manawatu Times*, “No Record Of George Street,” August 25, 1953. Sourced from Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data.”

original Coleman Place was present by the mid-twentieth century, officially it has had a longer history than George Street altogether.



Image 25: The Midland Hotel in Coleman Place, formerly Everybody's Theatre, with retail shops underneath.³⁴⁸

Perhaps the most important of the properties in Coleman Place during this period was what occupied the 'B' sections. On September 6, 1915, Everybody's Theatre opened in Coleman Place, being declared in an advertisement as having "Architectural Beauty, Sumptuous Inside Decorations, Luxurious Fittings, Comfort, Perfect Ventilation, and Lighting, "Everybody's" is Without Exception... The Finest Picture Theatre in the Dominion."³⁴⁹ While the theatre was able to hold 700 seats,³⁵⁰ and was host to a range of performances, it is not clear from sources exactly why it became defunct by 1928. Its origins are also confusing given the ownership records of the time. A picture description on *Manawatū Heritage* asserts that the

³⁴⁸ Photographer Unknown, "Hotel Midland," c. 1965. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/60a17ace-fa4a-430e-bb50-36a2870b38c1> (Accessed February 23, 2023).

³⁴⁹ *Manawatu Times*, "Advertisements," September 6, 1915, 1.

³⁵⁰ Pauline Knuckey, "Movie Culture in a Small Provincial City," 35.

theatre was built on leased land belonging to Arthur Hopwood's company, but the picture does not show the theatre extending onto B3 or B4.³⁵¹ The Land Ownership Data indicates that the theatre partially extended on B3, hence a partially shared lease there, though it is not clear why the New Zealand Picture Supplies Ltd., who owned the theatre, transferred their leases away in 1927 and 1928.³⁵² Regardless, the former theatre was transformed into the Midland Hotel, which opened on March 24, 1928.³⁵³ Despite a lengthy presence in Coleman Place until 1965, it too had a varied ownership history with a floor below the hotel extension serving as retail space. In approximately May 1948, plans were drawn to strengthen the building as there must have been concern that the outer brick wall was at risk of collapse.³⁵⁴ By 1965 however, plans indicated that the eastern wall of the hotel was leaning on the Mowlem building next to it, resulting in the Midland Hotel being demolished with the basement filled into the ground level.³⁵⁵ The Mowlem building, on C2, named after the family who owned it between 1921 and 1966, had previously been home to Berryman's music store and continued to serve as a retail location after Berryman relocated to Broadway Avenue in 1932.³⁵⁶ The building next to it, the Waldegrave building, remained in a similar ownership mode with various occupants being retailers throughout this period, particularly in regards to clothes making.³⁵⁷

Throughout this period to the 1960's, Coleman Place had functioned and looked like many other parts of the inner city. Not only had it become an important vector in connecting and providing access from the north west of the city, through George Street and Cuba Street to the city centre, but it had become a destination in its own right with a varied and changing retail space.

³⁵¹ Walley and Co., Crown Studios, "Everybody's Theatre, Coleman Place," 1928. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/9a896185-5c14-4e36-b29b-a8d1db1a68b6> (Accessed July 31, 2023).

³⁵² Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File "George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data," B1, B2, B3, B4.

³⁵³ *Manawatū Standard*, "Advertisements," March 23, 1928, 8.

³⁵⁴ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 00045:0:C70, "Floor plans, elevations, details and site plans, Midland Hotel, Coleman Place.," M254/9.

³⁵⁵ *Ibid*, M254/3, /4, /5, /6.

³⁵⁶ Palmerston North City Council Archives, A175/19/2, "Proposed North West Square Heritage Area and Buildings for Individual Listing," 47-49; Billens and Verry, *From Swamp to City*, 169.

³⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 54-55; Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File "George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data," C1.



Image 26: A view towards the north west corner of The Square and Coleman Place, 1950.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁸ Photographer Unknown, 'A View of Coleman Place,' 1950. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/2208351a-e845-4f01-a9e5-6169631d91e4> (Accessed February 23, 2023).

Chapter Three: Redevelopments and Contemporary Coleman Place

This chapter focuses on Coleman Place's redevelopments and form in the later period of the twentieth century into the early twenty-first century. In the lead up to Palmerston North's 1971 centennial, in which Coleman Place did not feature in any substantial way, some groups and individuals identified the space as one that could be altered to become a pedestrian mall. This idea provoked discussion amongst retailers who were concerned about access to the street. Equally, the City Council seemed uninterested, concentrating on the wider modernisation of the city, until several years later when the state of Coleman Place became an issue. While the Council had considered some separate ideas to redevelop the area, an agreement with the Hallenstein Brothers to develop the former Midland Hotel site propelled the Council to embrace the concept of a pedestrianised mall. When completed in 1973, it was anticipated that a more comprehensive development of the area would complete the Council's vision for Coleman Place as pedestrianised space. This did not occur for over two decades as conditions and proposals never intersected to create significant changes in the space. Although the Council began to view Coleman Place's buildings as having something of heritage value, it still considered plans that would have demolished them, including the possibility of constructing a new city library in the space. In 1996 after the Council relocated the city library nearby, the second redevelopment of Coleman Place occurred in the context of this, including it as part of a cultural precinct in the north west area of The Square. Despite not technically being a pedestrian mall after this period, with one way traffic restored to George Street, people have retained this as part of its identity with retailers embracing this in the branding of the area. Additionally, its application as a gathering place once again for people to use has remerged in a similar although different context to that of its earlier usage for this purpose. Although the area is perceived as historic, particularly with the preservation of older buildings and their facades, little of the historic memory of the place has been recognised or acknowledged.

The Lead up to Redevelopment



Image 27: A night-time and colour photograph showing Coleman Place, before its redevelopment, with a light display in the early 1970's.³⁵⁹

As stated in chapter one, by the 1970's the city had transformed markedly compared to the site the surveyors charted in their original plans for the settlement. By the centennial celebrations in 1970 and 1971, Palmerston North was entering into a period of change where the City Council became more involved in shaping the city, as well as promoting it. While Coleman Place avoided direct and sustained attention around this time, with other areas of the inner city being considered for development within the Council's modernising efforts, it was part of some discussion which had developed over time regarding issues with its long-standing layout as a space within the city's centre.

In mentioning the centennial, although Coleman Place did not have any notable part in the city's celebrations, it did feature in the city's purchasing of lights for the Christmas period. A city councillor and future mayor, Brian Elwood, was so inspired by the street lights in London

³⁵⁹ Jack Cottam, "Street View of Broadway Ave taken from Coleman Place," early 1970's. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/efb0a14a-e6df-4b37-8079-d755a78b2a00> (Accessed March 22, 2023).

after a visit that he convinced various groups, like the Retailers' Association, to fund them for an annual display beginning in December 1970.³⁶⁰ While they were most prominent “along Broadway, Fitzherbert Avenue and other entrance ways to the Square” until 1975, according to Margaret Tennant,³⁶¹ Coleman Place also enjoyed a display before its redevelopment, as seen in the prior photograph (Image 27) taken by Jack Cottam.³⁶²

Outside of this involvement by the Council, a plaque was installed in 1971 on the Bank of Australia New Zealand building, facing The Square side, to commemorate “the first survey office in Palmerston North built 1866.”³⁶³ Given the emblem imprinted matches with the Palmerston North Centennial Association, this memorialisation of the area would have had the Council's endorsement.³⁶⁴ Despite this, Coleman Place was not particularly linked to being part of the survey site, nor did it feature in wider centennial celebrations. This pattern continued in the most recent 2021 sesquicentennial celebrations where Coleman Place did not feature either (although this was likely due to the effects of the Covid-19 Pandemic, which scaled back public events).

In mentioning Brian Elwood, his mayoralty between 1971 and 1985 has been recognised as an important factor for how local governance in Palmerston North changed during this period. Tangibly, Elwood carried forward the plan to build the present-day council building, on part of the former railway yards and The Square.³⁶⁵ This decision was in part motivated by a desire to house all council staff in one location.³⁶⁶ While it was seen as controversial, it also helped to create a shift in letting council employees, with their respective expertise, work on projects without elected councillors interrupting them.³⁶⁷ Accordingly, this led to “the appointment of a chief executive officer for the city, who would focus on operational matters while the mayor and council focused on governance.”³⁶⁸ While Elwood's influence on the direction of Palmerston North is recognised by historians in modernising the city, estimations

³⁶⁰ Margaret Tennant, “When Palmerston North Partied: The Centennial Celebrations of 1970-1971,” *Manawatū Journal of History* 17 (2021): 28.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Cottam, “Street View of Broadway Ave taken from Coleman Place.”

³⁶³ Isaac Heaphy, “First Survey Centenary Plaque,” August 12, 2021.

³⁶⁴ Palmerston North Centennial Association, “Centenary of Palmerston North 1871-1971 Souvenir Pack,” 1971. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/2f2ceb79-db6d-409c-88b7-daa3a8647f00?child=d7cbdecd-0fa7-4862-baa2-6a9dafac056b> (Accessed August 2, 2023). This folder shows an emblem of the Palmerston North Centennial Association that corresponds to the symbol shown on the plaque.

³⁶⁵ Elizabeth Ward and Geoff Watson, “Towards A Political Biography,” In *City at the Centre: A History of Palmerston North*, Eds. Margaret Tennant, Geoff Watson, and Kerry Taylor (Auckland: Massey University Press, 2020), 171.

³⁶⁶ Ibid.

³⁶⁷ Ibid, 171-172.

³⁶⁸ Ibid, 172.

of his influence should be tempered somewhat by recognising the prior discussions in the 1960's by the City Council, and outside groups, around how the city's spaces should be used.³⁶⁹

When it came to Coleman Place, which had appeared on the periphery of the proposed changes of this time, it had previously attracted limited attention as a space that could be a testing ground for inner city projects. In 1967, Maureen Bird, a "city architect," submitted a plan to the Council which proposed temporarily transforming Coleman Place and the north west corner of The Square into a Christmas events space.³⁷⁰ Bird's proposal, identifying Coleman Place as "an excellent area for a meeting place," had three aims in using the space for the proposal lasting "for the period of December 18th – 23rd, 1967."³⁷¹ Firstly, to give the project an area "free from traffic, but in the central area."³⁷² Secondly, "to test public reaction to the idea of the pedestrian shopping precinct" as Palmerston North had no prior experience with a dedicated pedestrian shopping space.³⁷³ Thirdly, "to test reaction to the idea of a public market" as they appeared to be proving popular abroad, apparently having "been found to add colour and excitement to the urban centre... [helping] people to become a direct part of the life of a city."³⁷⁴ According to a later article in the *Manawatū Standard*, the idea of a pedestrian mall in Coleman Place was first discussed in 1965 at "a New Zealand architects' seminar at Massey University."³⁷⁵

Though Bird deemed the disruption to traffic a non-issue, given existing "alternative routes" through and around The Square, she identified a loss of "53 parking places" at "a maximum possible loss of \$70.00" as a cost for testing the project and increasing the city's "prestige."³⁷⁶ While her proposal went into further details about specific aspects of the project, Bird underscored the importance of each feature needing to ensure people using the space would

³⁶⁹ Matheson, *Council and Community*, 50.

³⁷⁰ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 7/1/2:28:1, "Proposal to Create a Pedestrian Mall in Coleman Place" (File includes subheading of: Unregistered Subject Files and Working Papers of David Evans (Deputy Town Planner) and Pedestrian Malls 1967-1968), Maureen Bird, "Christmas Project: Coleman Place."

³⁷¹ Ibid, "Christmas Project: Coleman Place," 1.

³⁷² Ibid.

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid.

³⁷⁵ *Manawatū Standard*, "Development of Mall Cost \$40,000," July 26, 1973, 13. Accessed via Microfilm from the Palmerston North City Library.

³⁷⁶ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 7/1/2:28:1, "Proposal to Create a Pedestrian Mall in Coleman Place," "Christmas Project: Coleman Place," 2, 4.

feel both accommodated and that they would be adding to something bigger for Palmerston North.³⁷⁷

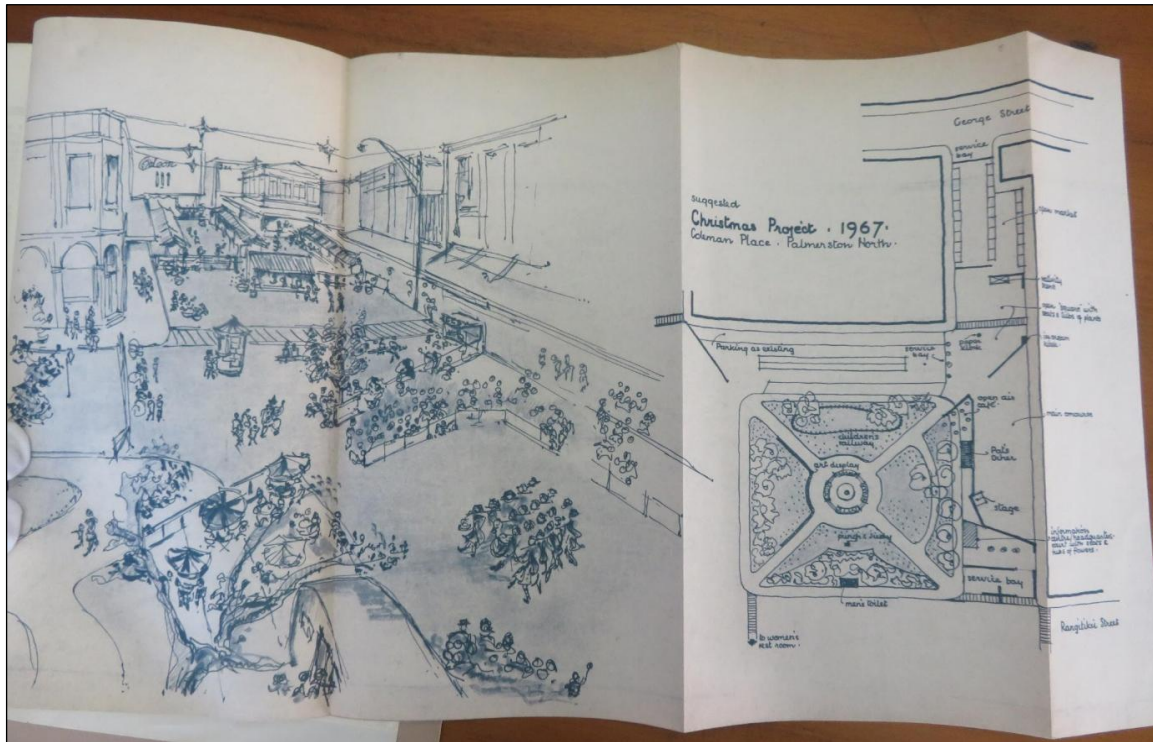


Image 28: Photograph showing the proposed 1967 Christmas Project in Coleman Place and part of The Square's northern road.³⁷⁸

The proposal, given that Bird did not appear to be working for the City Council, received little attention as a later *Tribune* article in July 1968 stated it was “shelved... for consideration.”³⁷⁹ A Council Traffic Committee meeting the prior year confirmed that it was “referred to the Public Relations Organisation,” without direct reference given elsewhere to Bird’s proposal in other meetings.³⁸⁰ Subsequently, the Palmerston North Civic Design Association (PNCDA) took great interest in it regarding “the possibility of developing pedestrian precincts in the city” to combat “future congestion” in the city’s centre.³⁸¹ Though the *Manawatū Standard* ran at least one public letter regarding it, echoing the successes of

³⁷⁷ Ibid, 5.

³⁷⁸ Own image taken with permission from Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 7/1/2:28:1, “Proposal to Create a Pedestrian Mall in Coleman Place,” Christmas Project 1967 ‘sketch’.

³⁷⁹ *Tribune*, “Pedestrian Malls-To Beat Congestion,” July 28, 1968. Article sourced from Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 7/1/2:28:1, “Proposal to Create a Pedestrian Mall in Coleman Place.”

³⁸⁰ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2:0:42, “Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 22 May 1967 - 14 December 1967,” 812.

³⁸¹ Ibid.

overseas malls and importance of spaces unfettered by traffic,³⁸² the PNCDA's discussion of the proposal showed that retailers were generally opposed to "any move which would stop the free flow of traffic around the perimeter of the Square."³⁸³ Ultimately, the PNCDA's meeting moved beyond Coleman Place, instead choosing to focus on the needs of retailers in the city.

Given Palmerston North's projected and real growth, discussions regarding traffic management had become increasingly common by this time. For instance, the Council had been experimenting with one-way traffic around The Square in 1967, with metered parking spaces in the inner city (which were introduced in a 1961 by-law) expanding further to balance the use of the spaces.³⁸⁴ As later observed in discussions in the twenty-first century around parking in Palmerston North, users, organisations, and businesses have often taken issue with proposed changes to the pre-existing parking regime and attempts to alter it.³⁸⁵ With vehicle ownership having rapidly increased during the prior decades across the country,³⁸⁶ a trend that would only grow over time, it is understandable that retailers would not have been sold on Bird's proposal sacrificing parking space during a busy time of the year. Considering these matters for Palmerston North, with a growing population and diversification of jobs that would put pressure on the city's infrastructure over time, street developments would have to factor in parking, especially within the inner city.

Perhaps in disregardment to these factors, the *Manawatū Standard* noted in the PNCDA's meeting that one attendee claimed of Coleman Place that it "had died in the space of four years."³⁸⁷ In the context of the Midland Hotel's demolition and the subsequent developments of that part of Coleman Place, this possibly gave the impression amongst the public that Coleman Place was run down and in need of redevelopment. While not invoking such terminology, this sentiment was what likely drove the Palmerston North Ratepayers' Association who "wrote asking the Council to arrange for the tidying up of Coleman Place

³⁸² *Manawatū Standard*, "Pedestrian Mall," July 31, 1968. Article sourced from Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 7/1/2:28:1, "Proposal to Create a Pedestrian Mall in Coleman Place."

³⁸³ *Manawatū Standard*, "Retailers Oppose Idea of Pedestrian Mall," August 2, 1968. Article sourced from Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 7/1/2:28:1, "Proposal to Create a Pedestrian Mall in Coleman Place."

³⁸⁴ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2:0:42, "Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 22 May 1967 - 14 December 1967," 811.

³⁸⁵ *Manawatū Standard*, "Public opinion prompts council backdown on parking hours," September 23, 2021; *Manawatū Standard*, "College St compromise costs \$480,000 for car parks," December 19, 2019. Both articles accessed via Stuff, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/news/126457567/public-opinion-prompts-council-backdown-on-parking-hours>; <https://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/news/118231065/college-st-compromise-costs-480000-for-car-parks>.

³⁸⁶ Eric Pawson, "Cars and the Motor Industry - A Motorised Society", Te Ara: The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, <https://teara.govt.nz/en/graph/22833/cars-registered> (Accessed July 31, 2023).

³⁸⁷ *Manawatū Standard*, "Retailers Oppose Idea of Pedestrian Mall."

generally, and to remove the fence along the frontage of the former Midland Hotel site.”³⁸⁸

This association had previously written to the Council to bring attention to Hopwood Hardware Co. Ltd.’s building next door, which was in an “apparent state of disrepair.”³⁸⁹

Though it is difficult to chronologically detail everything leading up to the Council’s decision to redevelop Coleman Place, the area that the Midland Hotel formerly occupied inadvertently drove a desire to do something about the space of Coleman Place. As early as 1966, the Town Clerk made some suggestions for the space, such as a new arcade complex that would extend between Coleman Place and Cuba Street, or the narrowing of Coleman Place’s street to extend the depth of the properties and shops.³⁹⁰ In August 1969, the Council received a letter from Fletcher Trust and Investment Company Limited that explored the possibility the former hotel site could be developed into an office space.³⁹¹ In October, the Town Planning and Property Committee considered this, deciding that Coleman Place would only be part of the wider developing Reynolds Report, discussed in chapter one as an inner city development plan, insofar that the site would extend to meet “the same extended build line” as the Hallensteins building. It was hoped that “the sale of this site could... assist in the acquisition of any further land required by the Council” within the Reynolds Report discussion of that time.³⁹² Due to complicating issues, this plan was cancelled soon into the following year, as despite the public not objecting to the proposal, the Council ran into several administrative concerns that it needed to address before it could move ahead.³⁹³ By the end of 1969, the Fletcher Development Company informed the Council that it was no longer interested in the property, while another, Auckland Development Company, had showed interest.³⁹⁴ Presumably however, nothing eventuated as the lease agreements in Coleman Place became complicated after the Arthur Hopwood Hardware Co. lease of B3 and B4 was surrendered in

³⁸⁸ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2:0:45, “Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 3 June 1969 - 9 December 1967,” 1855.

³⁸⁹ Palmerston North City Council Archives, 33/4/1, “Lease to Hopwood Hardware Co. Ltd.,” Town Planning Part 11, 10-7-69.

³⁹⁰ Ibid, Midland Hotel, July 14, 1966.

³⁹¹ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2:0:45, “Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 3 June 1969 - 9 December 1967,” 1680.

³⁹² Ibid, 1706.

³⁹³ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2:0:45, “Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 3 June 1969 - 9 December 1967,” 1855.

³⁹⁴ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2:0:47, “Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 1 September 1970 - 30 March 1971,” 2324-2325.

September 1970, after a property evaluation deemed the building “so poor that” the evaluator considered “it to be of no value at all.”³⁹⁵

Though this prior period around the time of Palmerston North’s centennial did not appear to create the conditions for Coleman Place to undergo a redevelopment, it had highlighted its potential to become something new in a city that was taking steps to modernise itself.

Centennial Renewal – Coleman Place’s First Redevelopment



Image 29: A photograph taken for the *Manawatu Evening Standard*, July 26, 1973, showing the redeveloped Coleman Place (Image credit to the *Manawatū Standard* and Stuff Limited).³⁹⁶

With the context Coleman Place found itself in the early 1970’s, it is somewhat surprising that a redevelopment eventuated given that the City Council’s renewed interest in Coleman

³⁹⁵ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2:0:47, “Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 1 September 1970 - 30 March 1971,” 2185; Palmerston North City Council Archives, 33/4/1, “Lease to Hopwood Hardware Co. Ltd.,” Re: Hopwood Leaseholds., June 19, 1970.

³⁹⁶ Manawatu Standard, “Coleman Mall,” July 26, 1973. Image reproduced with the permission and courtesy of *Manawatū Standard* and Stuff Limited. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/de00ef3d-b134-4674-8298-5ac0677688dd> (Accessed February 23, 2023).

Place, alongside other groups and businesses, did not translate into many meaningful changes until 1972.

In March 1971, Hallenstein Brothers Ltd. sent a letter to the Council indicating “interest in an exchange of their present site for the Council’s Midland Hotel site.”³⁹⁷ By November 2, an agreement was reached that a new building would be built on the Midland Hotel site, B1/B2, with ownership transferred to the Hallenstein Brothers, who would pay to lease their old building in this exchange until construction was completed the following year.³⁹⁸ While it is difficult to conclude precisely, given the gaps between sources, it appears that this agreement started the process of serious consideration into the redevelopment of Coleman Place.

Shortly thereafter, the Town Planning Committee allocated funds that December to the Council’s “property in Coleman Place” for repairs, as it was considering “recent proposals for the interim development of Coleman Place pending its conversion to a full pedestrian mall.”³⁹⁹ In February 1972, the Traffic Committee discussed how the Palmerston North Architectural Association would get involved in preparing “a development scheme for the Coleman Place parking precinct,”⁴⁰⁰ which it later hoped in an April presentation to have “coincide with the opening of the new Hallenstein Bros Building in June or July.”⁴⁰¹

Interestingly, this committee recommended that “the imposition of one way Traffic in Coleman Place” be implemented in the plans, despite the “interim development of Coleman Place” being referred to as such for the purpose of becoming “a pedestrian mall and parking precinct.”⁴⁰² Eventually, funding was settled upon in May, coming from the Capital Development Account at \$21,923, with \$4000 allocated additionally from the Council’s Roads Account.⁴⁰³ While Coleman Place’s redevelopment was not explored in great depth by previous councils, “the Engineers Committee made the point that this was a step in implementation of the Reynolds’ Plan,” despite prior indications that it was on the periphery of inner-city development.⁴⁰⁴ This more deliberate use and consideration of Coleman Place

³⁹⁷ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2:0:48, “Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 1 April 1971 - 27 September 1971,” 2426.

³⁹⁸ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2:0:49, “Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 8 October 1971 - 11 April 1972,” 56.

³⁹⁹ Ibid, 85.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, 120.

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, 256.

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2:0:50, “Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 1 May 1972 - 17 October 1972,” 285.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid.

ultimately led to the Council declining leases beyond 1975 and any interest in outside offers to purchase in this block until a later stage of development was reached.⁴⁰⁵

Unfortunately, it is difficult to state with certainty how well the actual redevelopment process went, and what occurred exactly when, by the Council's own records. In the end, the estimated cost of \$25,933, from a Finance Committee statement,⁴⁰⁶ ballooned to about \$40,000, according to a *Manawatū Standard* article detailing its development, dated July 26, 1973.⁴⁰⁷ In today's value, according to the Reserve Bank of New Zealand's inflation calculator, this would be equivalent to over \$600,000, a substantial investment given the Council's aim to further develop Coleman Place in the future.⁴⁰⁸ The article stated that "first approval was given to the scheme over 18 months ago," which would give credence to the argument that the Hallenstein Brothers arrangement was a major factor in Coleman Place's redevelopment.⁴⁰⁹ The development of Coleman Place was not finished until the following year as "delays with council workmen being required for other work have held its development back."⁴¹⁰ While most of the fund was allocated for contracting work in the Council's costing of the redevelopment,⁴¹¹ work was mainly completed "by council workmen with the exception of the ashphalting [sic] of the parking and pedestrian areas."⁴¹² Noting that Coleman Place was the city's first pedestrian mall, the *Manawatū Standard* commented that "the City Council had to compromise in the face of opposition from the retailers... who did not want too much parking, and not too little."⁴¹³ After decades of the Council's relationship in Coleman Place having been effectively divorced from the private uses within the space, the redevelopment came about due to a compromise between the groups that used it.

The references to Coleman Place being a 'mall' within this redevelopment are initially somewhat misleading, as it still allowed for one-way traffic from The Square to go through to George Street. While parking spaces had been eliminated with the additions of raised garden

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, 396.

⁴⁰⁶ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2:0:50, "Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 1 May 1972 - 17 October 1972," 453.

⁴⁰⁷ *Manawatū Standard*, "Development of Mall Cost \$40,000."

⁴⁰⁸ Reserve Bank of New Zealand Te Pūtea Matua, "Inflation calculator," May 3, 2023, <https://www.rbnz.govt.nz/monetary-policy/about-monetary-policy/inflation-calculator> (Comparing \$40,000 in 1973 Q1 to 2023 Q1).

⁴⁰⁹ *Manawatū Standard*, "Development of Mall Cost \$40,000."

⁴¹⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹¹ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2:0:50, "Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 1 May 1972 - 17 October 1972," 453.

⁴¹² *Manawatū Standard*, "Development of Mall Cost \$40,000."

⁴¹³ Ibid.

beds and a small fountain, with bollards and features blocking access from The Square, parking remained largely the same from the George Street entrance, to where the new Hallenstein Brothers building opened up to the rest of Coleman Place. Though these features were a source of joy to some, as evidenced by the Engineers Committee receiving “a letter of appreciation from Mr. F.G. Opie for the planting of trees in Coleman Place,”⁴¹⁴ they were not enough to stop an article in the *Guardian* from branding the mall as “dangerous” for maintaining through traffic.⁴¹⁵ While claiming that the public was less than satisfied with this inclusion, this article noted that “eight retailers” had sent a petition to the Council that complained pedestrian activity had changed, whereby people “now [crossed] diagonally, thereby missing the shop frontages altogether.”⁴¹⁶

When the mall officially opened on July 27, 1973, Mayor Elwood appeared to agree with removing motor vehicles from Coleman Place.⁴¹⁷ However, it is not known exactly when this change occurred, only that the one-way vehicle access was changed some time after its opening. Perhaps influencing the date to formally open Coleman Place at this time, given that the public would have already been using the redeveloped space, was a visit by Auckland City Mayor Sir Dove-Myer Robinson who jointly cut the opening ribbon with Elwood. With newspaper articles around this time discussing how difficult the Council’s projects of the civic complex, amongst other developments, were proving to move ahead with,⁴¹⁸ Mayor Robinson’s support for these efforts and quip: “don’t let layabouts and cars maul your mall,” must have been a welcomed comment.⁴¹⁹ Coleman Place, now being reinserted in a wider context it had not experienced since the Council first developed some public services there in the late nineteenth century, could now be seen in its opening as an example of progress for the city and how spaces in the inner-city could be better used to meet the demands of its different stakeholders.

⁴¹⁴ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/1/2:0:51, “Minutes of Committee Meetings (Public and Confidential), 25 October 1972 - 15 December 1972,” 598.

⁴¹⁵ *Guardian*, “Mall Dangerous,” August 1, 1973, Page 1. Accessed via Microfilm from the Palmerston North City Library.

⁴¹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁷ *Manawatū Standard*, “Sir Dove-Myer Goes ‘Walk-about’ In P.N.,” July 28, 1973, 1. Accessed via Microfilm from the Palmerston North City Library.

⁴¹⁸ *Guardian*, “letters to the editor: Complex siting,” August 1, 1973, Page 4; *Manawatū Standard*, “Call For Poll On Civic Centre Complex Misses The Main Point – Need Is Great Now For New Facility,” July 31, 1973, 2. Both articles accessed via microfilm from the Palmerston North City Library.

⁴¹⁹ *Manawatū Standard*, “Sir Dove-Myer Goes ‘Walk-about’ In P.N.”

The Redevelopments That Never Were



Image 30: A view of Coleman Place in colour, circa 1976.⁴²⁰

While the Council found an opening to redevelop Coleman Place in the long discussed form of a pedestrian mall, within a wider intention to reshape that part of the inner-city, plans to build upon this never eventuated over the following two decades.

Originally, the idea of pedestrianising Coleman Place was pursued with a commitment to redevelop the block of properties, that were previously deemed hazardous, into something modern and useful within the inner city. While they had been given an estimated demolition date beyond 1975, council memos in April 1973, between staff and Mayor Elwood, show that their intention to create a “multi-storey parking building to extend across the vacant land and above the single storey shops in Coleman Place” was blocked by various ownership and lease issues regarding these properties.⁴²¹ Despite Elwood’s suggesting “the acquisition of the old R.S.A. building and the subsequent demolition of some of the buildings to create an off-street

⁴²⁰ Jack Cottam, “ANZ Bank on the Corner of Coleman Place,” 1976. *Manawatū Heritage*, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/121d2204-ba71-4259-a038-970087a0d2c5> (Accessed March 22, 2023).

⁴²¹ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/5:0:36/79 Pt 1, “Correspondence for Properties - Cuba Street - George Street, Coleman Mall Block proposed development,” Re: Appointment Mr. Allan, Bobs Jean Bar, 12 April, 1973, and re: Rialto Building - Coleman Place, September 29, 1972.

parking area,” he then believed that the old Hallensteins building “could then be modernised for shopping purposes.”⁴²² In an October Council Traffic Committee meeting, the committee flagged the buildings occupying the end of the block with the anticipation that zoning would be changed “to provide for their future use for parking purposes.”⁴²³ This idea for a parking space was later adapted in 1974 with a proposal by “an Insurance Company in the erection of a large commercial building on the corner of George Street and Coleman Mall.”⁴²⁴ The councillors in both the Traffic and City Planning committees thought this was worth pursuing, agreeing that the proposal “envisaged was essential for the long-term well-being of the Central City area.”⁴²⁵ While another memo detailed a discussion Elwood had with an interested company in extending the pedestrian mall into George Street,⁴²⁶ a lack of sources within the following years indicate that they likely lost interest due to the Council’s delays in making decisions about the space.



Image 31: The R.S.A. building on the corner of George Street and Cuba Street (A1 on the Land Ownership Data), c. 1980, used as a restaurant and shopping space later in the twentieth century. Past the 1990’s, George Street, along with the R.S.A. building became a place of numerous cafe and eating establishments.⁴²⁷

⁴²² Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/5:0:36/79 Pt 1, “Correspondence for Properties,” Memo: Town Clerk, H.B. Building, April 18, 1973.

⁴²³ Ibid, Palmerston North City Council Traffic Committee Part 2, October 1, 1973.

⁴²⁴ Ibid, Palmerston North City Council Joint Meeting of Traffic and City Planning Committees Part 2, March 4, 1974.

⁴²⁵ Ibid.

⁴²⁶ Ibid, Re: Proposed Coleman Mall Developments, March 7, 1974.

⁴²⁷ Jack Cottam, “RSA Building,” c. 1980. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/5fbf61ad-98d1-407e-afcf-9d1c1c3853b7> (Accessed August 4, 2023).

Though the Council took ownership of the R.S.A. building, located on the corner of George Street and Cuba Street (Image 31), in 1974, purchased for a value not exceeding \$45,000 (based upon a 1973 figure),⁴²⁸ financial conditions meant that by November 1976 any proposed developments were scaled back to just involving parking space.⁴²⁹ Although it was proposed that the section between the old Hallensteins building and their new building would be converted to parking space, as the other buildings were deemed workable,⁴³⁰ the City Planner K. J. Tremaine cautioned against doing so. Having submitted a report in February 1977 about the importance of balancing retail activity around the Central Business Area, Tremaine argued that maintaining the area should be prioritised until the plans and financial means of creating a major redevelopment were available to the Council.⁴³¹ One paragraph particularly highlighted how one change could affect more than the immediate area:

To demolish the shops as proposed would, in my view, erode further the confidence of other retailers in the area. Also the continuous shopping facade would be removed. I have seen the effects of the type of demolition proposed in other parts of New Zealand. The removal of one building would also change the climate at street level for shoppers.⁴³²

Later, a report in March to the Housing, Property and Community Services Committee stated a preference for demolishing the buildings.⁴³³ However, Tremaine's assessment of Coleman Place presumably convinced the Council to instead adopt a maintenance approach until a time when another development could be warranted and funded. Although discussion returned to the demolition and sale of the block in 1978, with an aim to help fund the on-going Civic Centre project,⁴³⁴ the Council did not commit to this. Instead, it seems the idea of a commercial or office building in Coleman Place "on the old fire station site" was again discussed with interested parties, though nothing could be decided upon in November 1978.⁴³⁵ When an offer to purchase the block by the Wai Family Group was discussed in June 1979 at \$319,000, above the valuation of \$251,500, the Council declined it.⁴³⁶ In a letter to the group, the Town Clerk highlighted that another offer around \$400,000 was being

⁴²⁸ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/5:0:36/79 Pt 1, "Correspondence for Properties," PNCC Joint Meeting of Traffic and City Planning Committees Part 2, March 4, 1974.

⁴²⁹ Ibid, Cuba Street/Coleman Place - Dilapidated Corporation Properties, November 22, 1976.

⁴³⁰ *Manawatū Standard*, "Action delayed on block of shaky shops," December 7, 1976. Article sourced from Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/5:0:36/79 Pt 1, "Correspondence for Properties."

⁴³¹ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/5:0:36/79 Pt 1, "Correspondence for Properties," Proposed Demolition of Cuba Street-Coleman Place Corporation Buildings, February 8, 1977.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid, Council Properties at Coleman Place and Cuba Street, March 28, 1977.

⁴³⁴ Ibid, Sale of Endowment Land, August 8, 1978.

⁴³⁵ Ibid, Council Meeting (Part two of Minutes), November 27, 1978.

⁴³⁶ Ibid, Offer to Purchase Council-Owned Land in Cuba Street, George Street and Coleman Place, June 25, 1979.

considered and how important it was that the Council know how the area would be developed.⁴³⁷ Records do not state what happened with this other offer, although it is certain that it was eventually declined for presumably similar reasons. Though the maintenance approach was proving divisive as to how Coleman Place would function, as discussed in a *Guardian* article titled “Three Mall Shops Close – Unsafe,”⁴³⁸ it is clear from their hesitation to accept plans and offers that the Council desired to balance a range of demands present in the space.

Over the following decade, the idea of a commercial development in Coleman Place persisted but continued to go unfulfilled. In 1982, the Council produced a comprehensive plan to advertise the block to potential tenders.⁴³⁹ Mayor Elwood, quoted in a *Manawatū Standard* article, described it as “one of the most attractive inner-city sites available for development in any city in New Zealand.”⁴⁴⁰ While praising the “2045 square-metre area” as an opportunity to reinvigorate the area, it was claimed in the article that “the city was going into a period of a shortage of offices,” to which a development was posited as a solution to this.⁴⁴¹ Initial interest was low however, with a proposal between McMillan and Lockwood with McDonalds Properties Limited unable to agree to a joint project.⁴⁴² Another company, Slater Wilmshurst Limited, submitted a bid,⁴⁴³ though the Town Clerk deemed it less “intense” than what the Council envisioned for the area.⁴⁴⁴ After some discussion, their offer was rejected partially due to the company not wanting to construct higher than two storeys as they deemed it uneconomical on their part.⁴⁴⁵ In rejecting this offer, the House, Property, Animal Control and Civil Defence Committee highlighted how their view of a future redevelopment in Coleman Place was changing:

⁴³⁷ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/5:0:36/79 Pt 1, “Correspondence for Properties,” Council Land Corner George and Cuba Streets and Coleman Mall, June 27, 1979.

⁴³⁸ *Guardian*, “Three Mall Shops Close - Unsafe,” Sourced from Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/5:0:36/79 Pt 1, “Correspondence for Properties.”

⁴³⁹ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/5:0:36/79 Pt 1, “Correspondence for Properties,” Palmerston North City Corporation Invitation to Tender for the Site(s): Corner of Cuba Street, George Street and Coleman Mall.

⁴⁴⁰ *Manawatū Standard*, “Old Midland up for sale,” February 11, 1982. Sourced from Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/5:0:36/79 Pt 1, “Correspondence for Properties.”

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴² Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/5:0:36/79 Pt 1, “Correspondence for Properties,” George Street/Cuba Street/Coleman Block, 10 March, 1982; *Ibid.*, Housing, Property, Animal Control and Civic Defence Committee Part 2, March 9, 1982.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, Tender by Slater Wilmshurst Limited, July 8, 1982.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Offer to Purchase and Develop Part of Cuba/George Streets and Coleman Mall Block, August 3, 1982, 1-3.

The Committee believes that the existing buildings fronting Coleman Mall and, in particular, the old H.B. building are quite attractive and that renovation would add to the mall atmosphere generated by the buildings in even their present state. The old R.S.A building is also attractive.⁴⁴⁶

Although a development was expected “even if final development does not take place for 15 years,” renovation seemingly became the desired strategy to keep “the Council’s options open as to the form and style of the final development.”⁴⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the Council could continue to keep the tenants of the existing buildings, who had and continued to be plagued with uncertainty as to their business premises, in Coleman Place, albeit with on-going conversations into the future of the area.

Despite evaluating Coleman Place differently, several plans emerged years later to fulfil the Council’s desire to finalise a development. In 1985, Fletcher Development and Construction Limited submitted plans to the Council to build a complex that would add retail and office space within this block.⁴⁴⁸ They had previously proposed developing a hotel in the area in 1984, however decided against it “because of physical impracticabilities.”⁴⁴⁹ Noting that the parking issue had been solved by “the Council’s new car parking area in George Street,” this comprehensive new plan aimed to strike a balance of modernising the area to the needs of its users, also adapting some heritage elements in it, including the R.S.A. building into the design, and expanding the pedestrian mall into George Street.⁴⁵⁰ Although it appeared to be the most context sensitive proposal yet, ultimately, while other archival files could not be located citing any discussions of its merits, it did not end up being adopted.

Additionally, Coleman Place was depicted in 1985 as part of unrealised plans from the Council’s Planning Department to pedestrianise the city centre. Two designs (one pictured below on Image 32), while in the context of redesigning traffic around The Square to facilitate more pedestrianised areas, show Coleman Place as an intensified pedestrian

⁴⁴⁶ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/5:0:36/79 Pt 1, “Correspondence for Properties,” 4.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁸ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/5:0:36/79 Pt 2, “Correspondence for Properties - Cuba Street - George Street, Coleman Mall Block proposed development,” Fletcher Coleman Mall Development File. This particular archival file contains just plans created by Fletchers for the proposed development of the area.

⁴⁴⁹ *Manawatū Standard*, “Fletcher decides against hotel concept,” July 24, 1984. Sourced from Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/5:0:36/79 Pt 1, “Correspondence for Properties.”

⁴⁵⁰ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/5:0:36/79 Pt 2, “Correspondence for Properties,” Fletcher Coleman Mall Development File.

thoroughfare, attempting to complement its form rather than significantly alter any buildings.⁴⁵¹

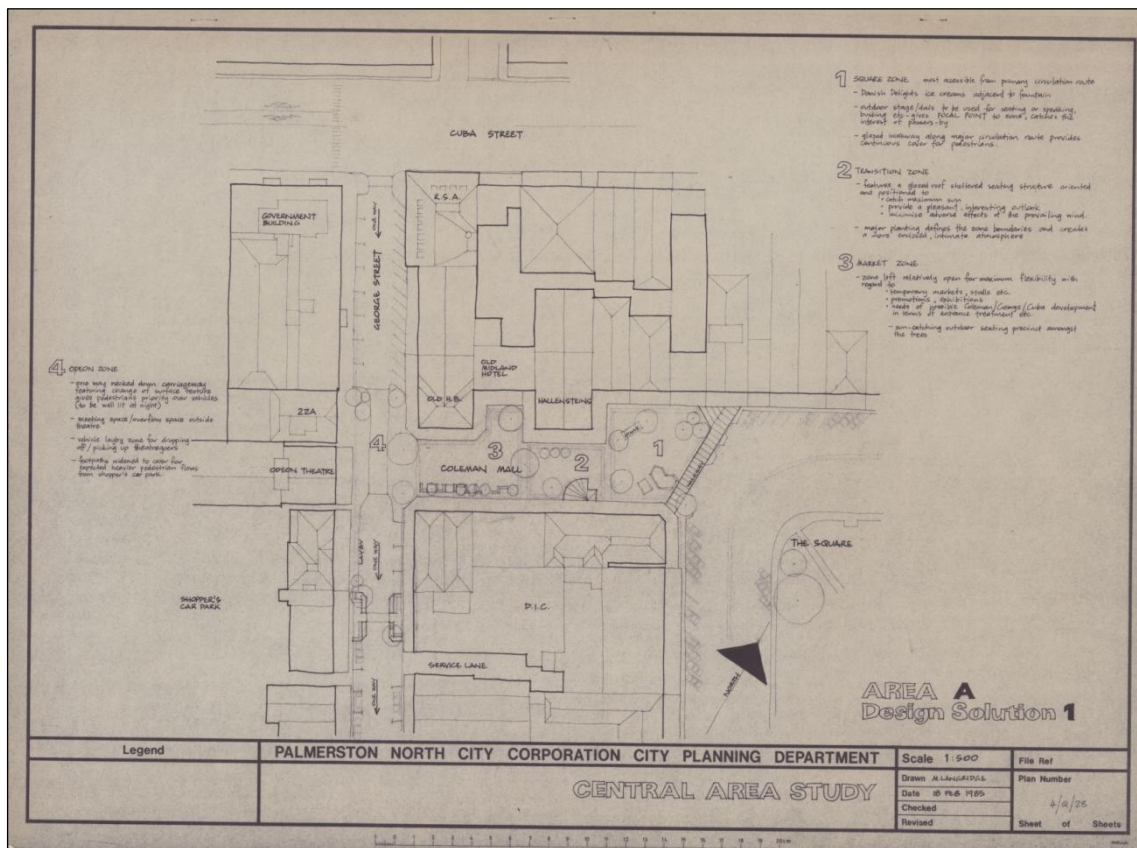


Image 32: One of two Coleman Place redesigns that featured in a plan to explore a wider pedestrianisation redevelopment of Palmerston North’s inner city.⁴⁵²

Later, in 1987, when the Council was considering a new site for a modern library, a plan was created to transform the block into the city’s library facility.⁴⁵³ Although comprehensive and deemed to be placed in a suitable area for pedestrians,⁴⁵⁴ the plan would have demolished everything in the block, except for the possibility of the R.S.A. building if it could be worked into the design.⁴⁵⁵ While a developer considered the plans and costed it to \$9,145,000, in

⁴⁵¹ Palmerston North City Corporation, “Plans for the development of Palmerston North,” 1985. Manawātū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/ea3cf0f6-42c6-4f5c-89fc-5c26b6a76c06?child=ea3cf0f6-42c6-4f5c-89fc-5c26b6a76c06> (Accessed July 5, 2023). The other plan can be seen on Manawātū Heritage as well.

⁴⁵² Ibid.

⁴⁵³ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/20:4:48, “Subject Files - Properties in Coleman Mall - Cuba Street, includes proposed relocation of public Library to Coleman Mall in 1987-1988,” Palmerston North City Corporation New Library Evaluation: Report on the proposed Re-Development of the Coleman Mall Block as a New City Library for the Palmerston North City Corporation, November, 1987.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, 6.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid, 7.

November 1987,⁴⁵⁶ archival material only detailed later in 1992, in regards to a new library, that the block did not suit the needs of a library building.⁴⁵⁷ Though Coleman Place had been referred to as being “in a very run-down state and in urgent need of attention” five years prior,⁴⁵⁸ presumably no other major plans emerged during this time for the area as the city library became the focus of the Council’s attention.

⁴⁵⁶ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 1/5/20:4:48, “Subject Files - Properties in Coleman Mall - Cuba Street, includes proposed relocation of public Library to Coleman Mall in 1987-1988,” Holmes Cook Hogg Cardiff Ltd. Report for Proposed New City Library, November 25, 1987.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid, Library Brief Working Group, May 6, 1992.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid, New Library Evaluation, December 14, 1987, 1.

North Western Square Development - Coleman Place's Second Redevelopment



Image 33: Coleman Place in June, 1992.⁴⁵⁹

While Coleman Place had been rejected as a suitable location for the city library, the creation of a new library facility nearby on The Square, and subsequent redevelopment of George Street, created the opportunity for its second redevelopment.

Within a similar culmination of events to its first redevelopment, the purchasing of the nearby former CM Ross building by the Council in 1992, which had been trading as Arthur Barnett since July 1989,⁴⁶⁰ created an opportunity for the Council to address Coleman Place's state. This did not occur immediately however as the development of the library and new buildings incorporated along George Street, along with an upgrade to the road and its infrastructure,⁴⁶¹ took until 1996 to be completed. In the planning and construction of the new library, a

⁴⁵⁹ Peter Patten, "Coleman Mall," 1992. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/0618821b-3560-475e-8777-4797fc7a82ee> (Accessed May 17, 2023).

⁴⁶⁰ Courtney, *The House That Quality and Value Built*, 34.

⁴⁶¹ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B "Coleman Place," Memorandum From CITY Enterprises, North West Corner of The Square - Redevelopment, September 21, 1994.

division between the existing buildings that connected the former department store to Coleman Place was created.⁴⁶² While part of the former CM Ross department store remained attached to the Norfolk House building, the Palmerston North City Library's main entrance-way was created out of this change. In creating a pedestrianised thoroughfare from The Square to George Street for an entrance-way, part of the former CM Ross building on the corner of Coleman Place and George Street was subdivided and partially demolished to accommodate this change.⁴⁶³ Because the Council owned the section and intended to develop it within the library's development, it is unknown if these alterations were particularly contentious without further investigation.



Image 34: A view from George Street showing the much smaller former CM Ross building (on the corner with Coleman Place) after its partial demolition, with the creation of the Palmerston North City Library's entrance walkway.⁴⁶⁴

⁴⁶² Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 00025:94:RM 886, "Resource Management DP 81805 - PNCC, 2-8 Coleman Place. Proposed Subdivision Lot 1 DP 79124," Survey Map, 5.

⁴⁶³ Ibid, 1-2.

⁴⁶⁴ Isaac Heaphy "Library Walkway from George Street, showing the former CM Ross building that is on the corner of George Street and Coleman Place," March 28, 2023.



Image 35: Photo showing the markedly altered building space that has occurred since the redevelopment of the City Library, effectively separating the former CM Ross Department Store from Coleman Place.⁴⁶⁵

As these redevelopment projects occurred, attention returned to Coleman Place where the Council was now able to create with greater certainty the redevelopment that would help to define the area. In January 1995, an article in the *Dominion* reported that regarding Coleman Place “more than 450 people visited a recent city development unit display, with many completing questionnaires and offering suggestions on how the area could be developed.”⁴⁶⁶ Describing the area as “a run-down corner of Palmerston North’s Square,” it noted that the Council’s landscape architect, John Brenkley, was “delighted at the response... about plans and ideas for improving the bleak vehicle and pedestrian thoroughfare to George Street.”⁴⁶⁷ In describing the main changes people wanted, they included “trees, street furniture, paving, water features and bikes stands,” with lesser importance put on “vehicle access, parking and

⁴⁶⁵ Isaac Heaphy, “Main Entrance walkway to Palmerston North City Library from The Square,” February 11, 2022.

⁴⁶⁶ *Dominion*, “Public welcomes plan to upgrade thoroughfare,” January 17, 1995, 6. Accessed via Newztext, possibly accessible via Microfilm from the Palmerston North City Library or other library archives.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

poster bollards.”⁴⁶⁸ Overall, the submissions pointed to a theme of “a continental-style boulevard with outdoor cafes, street theatres, music and artworks,” in keeping with the pedestrianised space that had developed two decades prior.⁴⁶⁹ In March 1995, the *Manawatū Standard* reported from the 286 surveys that “what people liked most about Coleman Place now was the historic buildings, the character, the proximity to George Street and The Square, and the street’s quiet, intimate scale.”⁴⁷⁰ While this article highlighted a desire for well-maintained heritage features amongst some people, there was a clear divide noted between retailers and those surveyed whether vehicle access and parking should return.⁴⁷¹

By May 8, 1995, the Council had three drafted plans it was considering after including the public consultation results.⁴⁷² Ultimately, while further pedestrianisation of Coleman Place had been anticipated in multiple proposals in the prior decades, the Council decided to ignore full pedestrianisation and reinstate one-way traffic through to George Street from The Square.⁴⁷³ Though this was debated, one councillor argued that it would benefit the retailers and that “we can always change it later.”⁴⁷⁴ The Mayor, Paul Rieger, agreed that the Council’s former ideas of Coleman Place had missed their time, but that “the council could move progressively away from parking in the area in the future.”⁴⁷⁵ An article in the *Guardian* noted that the Council’s decision was appreciated by George Street retailers who desired “shoppers to have car access into and parking in Coleman Place.”⁴⁷⁶ This sentiment was not shared by all as evidenced in a letter to the *Manawatū Standard*, which decried how the Council had missed an opportunity to make an area of Palmerston North, especially near the city library, specifically better for pedestrians.⁴⁷⁷

Although this decision had been made, the *Tribune* noted that there were still design decisions about a “literature theme” to be discussed before work could be scheduled for late 1996.⁴⁷⁸

⁴⁶⁸ *Dominion*, “Public welcomes plan to upgrade thoroughfare.”

⁴⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁰ *Manawatū Standard*, “Continental-style theme favoured,” March 7, 1995, 9. Sourced from PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B, “Coleman Place.”

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷² *Manawatū Standard*, “‘People place’ at heart of design ideas,” May 8, 1995. Sourced from PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B, “Coleman Place.”

⁴⁷³ *Manawatū Standard*, “‘Now is not the time’ to ban traffic,” June 7, 1995. Sourced from PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B, “Coleman Place.”

⁴⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷⁶ *Guardian*, “New look mall,” June 7, 1995. Sourced from PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B, “Coleman Place.”

⁴⁷⁷ *Manawatū Standard*, “Mall decision defies sense – Andrew E East, PN,” June 15, 1995. Sourced from PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B, “Coleman Place.”

⁴⁷⁸ *Tribune*, “Decision yet to be made,” June 11, 1995. Sourced from PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B, “Coleman Place.”

Other themes noted in planning documents included “Artwork in the Street” and “Drama in the Street,” with features of each respective design influencing how objects may look or be included in Coleman Place, alongside how the street would be laid out.⁴⁷⁹ Likely due to the proximity to the library, the literature theme was selected despite it being depicted as the pedestrianised option for Coleman Place.⁴⁸⁰ This theme was later dropped from planning altogether, although documents do not specifically state why.

Perhaps influencing that decision was a new plan for a development in the area of the former Midland Hotel, connecting parts of this block together while excluding the old Hallensteins and R.S.A. buildings.⁴⁸¹ Entitled the “Midland Court Project”, the proposal put forward by the Force Corporation to build a total of “seven units” within this area was offered in the aim to develop the space to be used for ‘professionals.’⁴⁸² Given later that only the buildings in Coleman Place between the new and old Hallensteins buildings were demolished, with new construction of some units in-between, its overall impact upon the redevelopment appeared to have been important but not critical to the Council’s existing plans of the time. It was later noted that the developing company, Midland Developments Ltd., had been frustrated by delays in the Council’s planning which took priority before their construction work could begin,⁴⁸³ despite prior agreements with the Council in their acquisition and development of the properties in question.⁴⁸⁴ Because of this, it appears that “a down-scaling of the original proposal to cover Coleman Place and immediate environs” was decided upon, thus shrinking the final result of the project.⁴⁸⁵

By the end of 1995, the *Manawatū Standard* noted that after five tries in the past year, the Council had finalised plans to redevelop Coleman Place.⁴⁸⁶ After 22 years, the Council had decided upon a plan that would reopen “one-way traffic from The Square to George Street, with parking on the northern side of the street,” with the southern footpath measuring “7.2

⁴⁷⁹ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B, “Coleman Place,” Coleman Place Design Options, May 25, 1995, 4.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid, 6.

⁴⁸¹ *Manawatū Standard*, “Coleman Mall gets a revamp,” June 12, 1995. Sourced from PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B, “Coleman Place.”

⁴⁸² Ibid.

⁴⁸³ *Manawatū Standard*, “Demolition work in Coleman Mall about to begin,” June 24, 1996. Sourced from PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B, “Coleman Place.”

⁴⁸⁴ *Manawatū Standard*, “Upgrade work to begin soon,” July 24, 1996. Sourced from PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B, “Coleman Place.”

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁶ *Manawatū Standard*, “Council approves revamp plan,” December 5, 1995. Sourced from PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B, “Coleman Place.”

metres wide, planted with trees and providing room for cafe seating.”⁴⁸⁷ An upgrade to “the underground services – a new main sewer, water mains and the stormwater [sic] connections” was also included in the scheduled work.⁴⁸⁸ Although sources indicate that work was not expected to start until later in 1996, councillors were allowed to re-prioritise the Coleman Place redevelopment above several other projects early that year.⁴⁸⁹ As a result, the Council’s work at Coleman Place was scheduled theoretically to begin sometime before the end of July, however this did not occur due to the timing of the Council’s budget and concerns about the plan.⁴⁹⁰ An altered form of the original plan was adopted on July 22 instead, which ultimately allowed for retailers to have roughly “six weeks of Christmas trading” at the cost of forgoing a more intensive development period.⁴⁹¹ Thus, the storm-water upgrades, along with other utility service work, were lessened in scope.⁴⁹²

Despite unforeseen issues during the work, most of the original plan was kept with the exceptions of changing the path material “from totally block paving to asphalt with brick edging” and reducing “the amount of street furniture to tree guards and rubbish bins.”⁴⁹³ Completed under-budget at \$465,515, the adjusted plan cost considerably less than the original plan at \$771,000.⁴⁹⁴ However, it ran beyond the expected time-frame of “late July 1996” to “10 November 1996” due to “bad weather.”⁴⁹⁵ Though the opening ceremony went ahead on the 16th despite having “two areas not completed” until “the following week,” the summary report of the redevelopment in 1997 stated that “the retailers and public have been very positive about the redevelopment.”⁴⁹⁶ Although several features had been removed due to the decreased budget of the redevelopment, the report hinted that some missing features could later be added if the Council desired to increase Coleman Place’s vibrancy.⁴⁹⁷

⁴⁸⁷ *Manawatū Standard*, “Council approves revamp plan.”

⁴⁸⁸ *Manawatū Standard*, “Council comes up trumps with project,” July 29, 1996. Sourced from PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B, “Coleman Place.”

⁴⁸⁹ *Manawatū Standard*, “Coleman Place work takes precedence,” February 20, 1996. Sourced from PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B, “Coleman Place.”

⁴⁹⁰ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B “Coleman Place,” Coleman Place Summary Report, January 15, 1997, 2.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1-6.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

Millennium ‘Mall’



Image 36: A photograph taken in August 2000 after Coleman Place’s second redevelopment.⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹⁸ Photographer Unknown, “Coleman Place,” August 2000. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/8f8fb160-728c-44c5-b0b7-71e6a25925d1> (Accessed May 17, 2023).

Since the 1996 redevelopment, Coleman Place has largely retained its layout into the new millennium. At the same time, subsequent changes have served to shape it as a place unique in the city's centre, part of a wider cultural precinct, while leaning into the retained heritage elements which survived the twentieth century.

In 2000 there was an effort to address concerns around illegal parking in Coleman Place, with bollards to prevent parking where it was otherwise not intended.⁴⁹⁹ Although businesses submitted against the change,⁵⁰⁰ ultimately the Council installed some bollards in parts while rejecting their proposal of further road and footpath improvements.⁵⁰¹ Planning documents detail that “as Coleman Mall is in the Western Precinct and has strong linkages with George Street,” the style and colour chosen for the bollards was the same as what was previously installed in George Street.⁵⁰² In 2002, businesses requested from the Council their desire to expand parking in Coleman Place again.⁵⁰³ From the photography that exists of the area to the present, and a lack of documents following up this request, it appears that the parking regime has not changed since this time. Development of the nearby Harvey Norman store, which has an entrance to George Street, and its underground car park may have alleviated this demand for further accessibility to this area of the city. However, further investigation would be required to definitively comment on this aspect.

⁴⁹⁹ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B “Coleman Place,” Coleman Mall Bollards [sic] - Project Information Sheet, May 29, 2000.

⁵⁰⁰ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B “Coleman Place,” Clarification of Coleman Mall Bollard Annual Plan Submission Decision, October 12, 2000.

⁵⁰¹ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B “Coleman Place,” Clarification of Coleman Mall Bollard Annual Plan Submission Decision, December 14, 2000.

⁵⁰² Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B “Coleman Place,” Coleman Mall Bollards and Bikeracks, March 17, 2000.

⁵⁰³ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B “Coleman Place,” Carparking in Coleman Mall, December 18, 2002.



Image 37: A view of Coleman Place in the 2000's after the installation of bollards.⁵⁰⁴

Other notable changes to the streetscape, aside from removing a crossing part-way through Coleman Place, include a series of place-making objects. The first, a series of ‘boutique’ signs on each of the smaller, and painted, street lights in Coleman Place, denoting ‘Coleman and George Street Palmerston North,’ are a somewhat significant addition given that this was a concept proposed by retailers “to develop awareness of their area... and publicity both within the City and beyond the region.”⁵⁰⁵ At some stage after being discussed in 2006, the signage appeared on both streets and has remained part of the streetscape. The following year, the ‘Numbers’ sculpture, on the corner of The Square and Coleman Place, was unveiled on September 9, 2007.⁵⁰⁶ Part of a wider project by the Palmerston North Public Sculpture Trust, the metal piece by Anton Parsons was the first public artwork piece to be included in “the western edge of The Square.”⁵⁰⁷ Later, boulders were added to parts of Coleman Place as part of a controversial makeover in August 2011. Though the boulders remain, the cosmetic additions by “a community working bee to use low-cost ideas for making Palmerston North more homely” have mostly disappeared.⁵⁰⁸ While some pointed out that their alterations were “not keeping with the historic quarter theme of the area,”⁵⁰⁹ Coleman

⁵⁰⁴ Colin Rush, “Cherry Blossoms on Coleman Place,” c. 2000s. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/c1e621c3-6805-45ad-9bb9-c66337966150> (Accessed May 17, 2023).

⁵⁰⁵ Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B “Coleman Place,” Coleman and George St Signage, April 5, 2006.

⁵⁰⁶ *Manawatū Standard*, “City invited to enjoy new artwork,” September 6, 2007. Sourced from Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B “Coleman Place.”

⁵⁰⁷ *Manawatū Standard*, “Coleman Mall street art prepared for revelation,” September 5, 2007. Sourced from Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B “Coleman Place.”

⁵⁰⁸ *Manawatū Standard*, “Palmerston North mall makeover ‘offensive,’” August 9, 2011. Accessed via Stuff, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/5413249/Palmerston-North-mall-makeover-offensive>.

⁵⁰⁹ *Manawatū Standard*, “Palmerston North mall makeover ‘offensive.’”

Place had become more linked to being a gathering place since the last redevelopment than just serving as a retail thoroughfare as seen in this event.



Image 38: A view of Coleman Place with the ‘Numbers’ sculpture on the corner of The Square.⁵¹⁰

Although these changes within Coleman Place have helped to reinforce it as being part of a wider cultural precinct, it has equally been up to its users to sustain this image beyond any geographical closeness to this designated area. While this has come in the form of the ‘Coleman & George Street’ branding, seen also in a pamphlet (produced some time in the late 2000’s) to advertise “Palmerston North’s Boutique and Café Quarter”,⁵¹¹ people have used Coleman Place periodically for street events well into this century. Although this has often been in conjunction with events based in George Street, some have been centred entirely in Coleman Place. One clear example of this was the opening of the “Palmy Farmers’ Market”

⁵¹⁰ Isaac Heaphy, “Numbers Sculpture and Coleman Place,” March 28, 2023.

⁵¹¹ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data,” Coleman & George Street brochure.

in November 2009, which contained itself to Coleman Place.⁵¹² While being part of a nation-wide local food movement initiative, and despite not becoming a permanent fixture into the following decade, the market proved to be a popular event in Coleman Place where other markets have typically avoided inner-city spaces entirely (apart from more recent nightly food markets in The Square).⁵¹³

Perhaps the biggest change to Coleman Place during this period, as well as being a significant contributor to activity within it outside of regular retail business, has been the inclusion of the Palmerston North City Library's 'Youth Space' in the old Hallensteins building. Formerly in a basement room of the new library facility, the shift of the 'Youth Space' to the historic building, that had previously housed a bar and restaurant from the 1990's, has opened up more opportunities for Coleman Place to be utilised as a social and cultural space for younger people.⁵¹⁴ According to the *Manawatū Standard*, the Council "put \$200,000 towards creating the Youth Space" in 2011,⁵¹⁵ which opened in July.⁵¹⁶ While it was designed as a space for young people in mind, the multi-faceted facility was also billed as one which could host groups or events outside of its regular use.⁵¹⁷ Although some modern artwork murals which "reflects the centre's vibe" cover parts of the exterior,⁵¹⁸ the former Hallensteins building facade has been retained, much like the rest of the historic buildings in Coleman Place.

⁵¹² *Guardian*, "City to get own Farmers' Market," October 8, 2009; *Manawatū Standard*, "Farmers' markets go head to head," November 5, 2009. Articles sourced from Palmerston North Community Archives, A175/236 "Research File - 'Markets'."

⁵¹³ *Guardian*, "To market, to market...", November 19, 2009; *Tribune*, "Local market proves its popularity," January 17, 2010; *Manawatū Standard*, "Market birthday," November 8, 2010, 3. Articles sourced from Palmerston North Community Archives, A175/236 "Research File - 'Markets'."

⁵¹⁴ *Manawatū Standard*, "Young people have new space role," October 5, 2010. Archived in Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B "Coleman Place."

⁵¹⁵ *Manawatū Standard*, "Editorial: Funds for youth venue hard to find," January 23, 2012. Accessed via Stuff, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/opinion/6299359/Editorial-Funds-for-youth-venue-hard-to-find>.

⁵¹⁶ *Manawatū Standard*, "Youth In Space," July 1, 2011, 19. Accessed via Newztext, also accessible via Microfilm from the Palmerston North City Library.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁸ *Manawatū Standard*, "Youth Space brings the inside out with new mural," December 8, 2017. Accessed via Stuff, <https://www.stuff.co.nz/manawatu-standard/news/99522510/youth-space-brings-the-inside-out-with-new-mural>.



Image 39: A view of the Youth Space, formerly the old Hallensteins building, on the corner of George Street and Coleman Place.⁵¹⁹

Above all the physical changes that have helped to shape Coleman Place as part of a wider cultural precinct is a somewhat confused historic memory of the place. This is perhaps best illustrated by the unofficial name of ‘Coleman Mall,’ seen on the current street sign (Image 38), that has become attached to the area since the first redevelopment. Despite being used interchangeably, Coleman Place has remained the official designation on resources like Google Maps.⁵²⁰ When vehicle through access was ultimately removed, the reference was an appropriate one given that it became a pedestrianised area. In a 1975 *Guardian* article, which discussed the lead architect’s vision for this redevelopment, it was noted that “some of the retailers... understood it was to be renamed a mall and feel the name would add a lot to the

⁵¹⁹ Ian Matheson City Archives, “Youth Space, 1-7 Coleman Place,” June 2020. Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/3613d232-9a89-408f-a8f0-b9da540e5cd0> (Accessed May 17, 2023).

⁵²⁰ Google Maps, "Coleman Place, Palmerston North Central, Palmerston North." Google, <https://www.google.com/maps/place/Coleman+Place,+Palmerston+North+Central,+Palmerston+North+4410/@-40.3557854,175.608444,19z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m6!3m5!1s0x6d41b2d1a0f16e43:0xb50407a4f4bce29e!8m2!3d-40.3557854!4d175.6090877!16s%2Fg%2F1tj91r4r?entry=ttu> (Accessed August 31, 2023).

area.”⁵²¹ After the second redevelopment in 1996, this was again noted in the *Manawatū Standard* which reported that since “most people [knew] it as Coleman Mall”, and that “most of the 20-odd businesses in the Coleman area are keen to change the name”, a name change would make sense.⁵²² Describing Coleman Place as a mall given that through traffic was restored only seems appropriate in the memory that it was not always open to traffic, with this fact separating it as a unique space within Palmerston North’s history.

A separate claim by the Central Business District co-ordinator that in 1996 Coleman Place was designated “Coleman Mall in 1974 after council redevelopment but has since returned to its original name,”⁵²³ seems unlikely given Council records appear to use ‘mall’ interchangeably with ‘place’ since the first redevelopment. Although further sources around this period may clarify this, research into Coleman Place has shown throughout this period that Coleman Place has always been the official name for this area in records since it was at some stage renamed from Corporation Street, whenever the Council named it after Sylvester Coleman.

Consequently, because of what survived and happened within Coleman Place in the late twentieth century, the present appearance of Coleman Place has dominated its public image, memory and understanding of the area. Although some sources, such as the heritage catalogues,⁵²⁴ and a Palmerston North architectural heritage trail brochure,⁵²⁵ outline some of the history of Coleman Place, nothing has communicated its history in the space beyond what can currently be observed there. Given that nothing original exists from its early history, apart from the protruding street corner where Coleman Place meets George Street (this is perhaps debatable in and of itself as the original A2 property boundaries were subdivided)⁵²⁶ or perhaps Norfolk House (although this did not develop until decades after the first structures in Coleman Place, replacing a pre-existing space), Coleman Place’s heritage can

⁵²¹ *Guardian*, “What’s in a name?,” May 7, 1975, 6. Accessed via Microfilm from the Palmerston North City Library.

⁵²² *Manawatū Standard*, “Retailers pushing for name change,” November 14, 1996, 17. Sourced from Palmerston North City Council Archives, PNCC 00050A:0:C70 A/B “Coleman Place.”

⁵²³ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁴ Palmerston North City Council Archives, A175/19, “Palmerston North CBD Heritage Inventory,”; Palmerston North City Council Archives, A175/19/2, “Proposed North West Square Heritage Area and Buildings for Individual Listing,”; Palmerston North City Council, “Built Heritage Inventory: PNCC District Plan and HNZPT Listed Built Heritage 2020.”

⁵²⁵ Val Burr, *Palmerston North Heritage Trails: The Architectural Heritage Walk, A guide to architecturally designed buildings in central Palmerston North, 1866-1980*, Cushla Scrivens, Ed. (Palmerston North: Palmerston North City Council, 2018). Accessed via Manawatū Heritage, <https://manawatuheritage.pncc.govt.nz/item/4bd87550-c2c4-4bcf-bba8-f79bd69d4bfa>

⁵²⁶ Palmerston North Community Archive, A175/154 Research File “George Street, Cuba Street, Coleman Place Properties: Land Ownership Data prepared by students of Victoria University (1980),” A2.

largely be seen to have been adapted from the surviving features of the inter-war period constructions. Regardless, the links to Coleman Place's past in its uses as a public and commercial space, while not widely recognised or commemorated, are firmly part of the transformed 'mall'.

Conclusion

In pursuing a greater understanding of Coleman Place's history as a place in Palmerston North, this thesis set out to answer questions regarding how and why it came about, the person whom it was named after, and what its development says about it and the idea of place more broadly.

Although some details are obscure concerning the early formation of the area, it is clear that Coleman Place developed organically over time as a thoroughfare space. While planned in some respects, the development of Coleman Place was different from the nearby town centre due to it being sited on land that was initially a government reserve. Intended to become part of the wider area of commercial developments, as seen with its early lease use, the Palmerston North Borough Council's decision to retain ownership of the government reserve meant that it became a place where some of the town's early public facilities were built. After the town's first fire brigade station, private library, and some council offices disappeared not long into the twentieth century, Coleman Place became primarily used for commercial endeavours, with its subsequent history over the century being dominated by retail enterprises. Also in the early twentieth century, Coleman Place was used as a gathering place for a period, further adding to its significance as a unique space near Palmerston North's centre.

Coleman Place, while later acknowledged as part of Palmerston North's history with the survey plaque, has undoubtedly become divorced from Sylvester Coleman, whom it was named after. While his life's history in Palmerston North was relatively short, Coleman was characteristic of many of the early European settlers who came from abroad in the nineteenth century, from somewhat obscure pasts, and travelled within New Zealand to seek improvement and fulfilment in a new place. Despite setbacks throughout his time in the region, Coleman became a respected figure within Marton and Palmerston North's communities, having demonstrated a spirit for public service outside of his business ventures. Although his presence on the Borough Council was significant for his popularity in elections and being a notable part of early Palmerston North political history, little can be stated with certainty on this due to missing sources other than he, like other men on the Council, did not likely have an outsized role. When Coleman died, though he was fondly remembered by the locality and those who knew him, his memory quickly faded from the town, possibly because

the history of Palmerston North and its people had not become something to memorialise until the following century, by which time he had been largely forgotten. While Coleman was noted as having a minor role in the development of the centre's longest-running continuously printed paper, the *Manawatū Standard*, his significance ultimately is attached to his ownership of the leased land of the former Corporation Street that, most likely due his leasing of the land, became named after him.

In the context of the modernisation that the Palmerston North City Council began to undertake around the time of the city's centennial, Coleman Place gradually became a site where the concept of a pedestrianised mall was tried. The 1973 redevelopment, as argued, appeared to have primarily occurred due to the Council agreeing to an exchange of properties with the Hallenstein Brothers, who built their new premises on the site of the former Midland Hotel. Although somewhat controversial and on the periphery of other important developments in Palmerston North at this time, Coleman Place became part of a dialogue in how further anticipated developments would shape the area. Coleman Place retained its commercial usage while the Council considered future plans with constraints and other priorities. However, no substantial development occurred here for over two decades. During this time, the Council developed a nuanced view of the place that required future redevelopment to responsibly balance the needs of and requirements from it as a retail space, despite continuing to consider redevelopment proposals. At the same time, Coleman Place's heritage value from its buildings was partially recognised within the Council's decision to adopt a maintenance approach for the area. While rejected as a location suitable for a new city library, the redevelopment of the nearby CM Ross building into the city library, along with the redevelopment of George Street, created the opportunity for Coleman Place's second redevelopment in 1996. This second redevelopment, though in a wider context of identifying the area as part of a cultural precinct and restoring through traffic from The Square, reinforced the space as a unique place with elements from Coleman Place's history still present, despite no obvious recognition of this history.

Coleman Place, as a place, presents different aspects of understanding how places more broadly may be understood in and of themselves. Usually places are not accidental, instead representing a pattern of activity or inactivity by their users. This is clear in the development and retention of Coleman Place's historic buildings, those of which remained over the twentieth century, in part because of the dominant use of the space for commercial purposes. The other reason they survived was due to the Palmerston North City Councils decisions,

which, through a lack of destructive redevelopment, helped to retain aspects of Coleman Place's history and its vibrancy as a space for people through the two redevelopments (although this was not intentional in the first redevelopment). Palmerston North's various Councils have had a significant impact on Coleman Place's history and development, seen in the early development of the area and subsequent redevelopments of it into a more pedestrianised space after the city's centennial. Other actors, such as the public, interest groups, and businesses, have had equal importance throughout its uses as a space, particularly now as it relates to events and contributing to a wider cultural precinct in the twenty-first century.

It is perhaps not surprising then, as has been highlighted, that understanding of Coleman Place's history is lacking in the site currently. Though now part of a wider cultural precinct and being attached to the nearby Square, with these spaces dominating the area's activity and focus, Coleman place has been principally conceived as a connector between two spaces rather than as a site of significance in its own right.⁵²⁷ This suggests that the memory of place is reasonably malleable with how the space is used and maintained. Its historic memory being tangentially acknowledged on a nearby plaque commemorating Palmerston North's survey, ignoring the heritage buildings that preserve only part of the place's history, gives the impression that its only significance can be tied to this. As argued however, a more in depth understanding of Coleman Place and Sylvester Coleman presents an opportunity to not only better understand the place itself, but for understanding wider aspects of Palmerston North's histories and places, with their significances expanded upon.

Place histories, as argued in the introduction, could be applied to New Zealand's new history curriculum in furthering understanding histories with their relationships to the world through various lenses. Reflecting upon the curriculum's four big ideas, Coleman Place intersects with each big idea to some extent, connecting it to a wider context for learners to understand it specifically, while further encouraging wider historical knowledge and exploration of ideas.⁵²⁸ In understanding that "Māori history is the foundational... history of Aotearoa [me Te Waipounamu] New Zealand," Coleman Place can be seen to be an important site in this as it was connected with the area where the surveying of Palmerston North took place.⁵²⁹ Using this framework, Coleman Place's development can be understood to have been a microcosm

⁵²⁷ Pickles, "Christchurch's Cathedral Square and the Importance of Public Squares," 13.

⁵²⁸ Ministry of Education, *Aotearoa New Zealand's Histories in the New Zealand Curriculum*, 1-2.

⁵²⁹ *Ibid*, 2.

of the colonisation and settlement processes that transformed and shaped the area beyond its state before this, becoming a place of commerce, gathering, and movement, where Council decision making further influenced the use of the place.⁵³⁰ Its history can further be understood to have “been shaped by the use of power,” with an intersection of individuals (such as Sylvester Coleman), interest groups (such as the various businesses and associations that have involved themselves in the area), and local and national government entities, all influencing, to varying degrees, how Coleman Place looks and functions.⁵³¹ Although some actors have had significantly more influence over Coleman Place, with the various Councils maintaining ownership through the area originally having been a government reserve, the everyday shaping and presentation of Coleman Place can be understood to have been a mixed and lengthy process, with place making and historic preservation only showing part of its history. Lastly, Coleman Place as a site of “connections” in one interpretation can be understood and tied to Sylvester Coleman, who was quick to gain influence in his community, though he faded quickly in the area’s historic memory.⁵³² Representing many people throughout history who are not strongly recalled, this gap in the area’s history partially explains why further redevelopments and celebrations of the city’s centre have not recalled Coleman Place beyond the early twentieth century (apart from the survey commemoration) in information regarding Coleman or the area. Outside of the history curriculum, learning about Coleman Place would again not only create a greater understanding of the place itself, but for understanding aspects of Palmerston North’s wider histories and other places more broadly.

Furthermore, research about Coleman Place would benefit from a wider comparison of its history with other inner-city locations or other places in New Zealand, perhaps even beyond. Particularly for Palmerston North, a more comprehensive examination of commercial and retail spaces would add greater understanding of how places have developed, changed, and impacted each other. The development of traffic management and vehicle parking, as noted in chapter three around and after the city’s centennial, may also be worth investigating in depth with how this has related to the development of places throughout the city.

Additionally, following up source gaps and clarifying a more specific series of observations noted by Matheson, in identifying patterns of change,⁵³³ would add to a more specific

⁵³⁰ Ministry of Education, *Aotearoa New Zealand’s Histories in the New Zealand Curriculum*, 2.

⁵³¹ Ibid.

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Palmerston North Community Archives, A210/10, “Coleman Place,” Notes by Ian Matheson on The Development of Coleman Place and The North Side of the Square. Matheson noted about Coleman Place that “the study of this area... from 1877 is marked by three patterns – that in every quarter of a century almost all of

business history of Coleman Place that has largely been ignored in favour of examining a larger developmental place history here.

the businessman have changed; that the pattern of the function of businesses is slow to change though over the time there is a move from more general household provisioning to the provision of clothing and services; that the shape of the architecture does not basically change very markedly, but the introduction of new structures gives the impression of very considerable change.”

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