

**HERITAGE STATEMENT**  
**44 RUE BALGUERIE, AKAROA – DWELLING**



**PHOTOGRAPH (NO DATE, PRE-1910 AT LEAST)**

44 Rue Balguerie. The women in the photo are identified as Mrs S. Curry (nee Lena Lelievre), Mrs John Curry, and Mrs A. Gungall (nee Margaret Curry). Photo held Akaroa Museum, no.93.



**PHOTOGRAPH (1993)**

## STATEMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The dwelling at 44 Rue Balguerie, Akaroa, is listed as a Notable building in Appendix V of the Banks Peninsula District Plan's *Schedule of Notable Buildings, Objects and Sites*.

Akaroa is the oldest town in Canterbury and is also one of the most significant historic European settlements in New Zealand. While Akaroa has a long associated history with Maori, it is thought it was not as populated as other harbours along the shoreline such as Takapuneke, Onuku, Wainui or Tikao Bay. The special historic interest stems from Akaroa having been founded as the only organised French settlement in New Zealand. The architectural significance derives from the survival in Akaroa of a larger number of 19th century buildings than have survived in other New Zealand towns of comparable size.

The Akaroa township was registered by the Historic Places Trust in 1999 as an Historic Area. This registration recognises the importance of Akaroa's historic character which is set by older buildings to an extent greater than any other New Zealand town.

The dwelling at 44 Rue Balguerie dates from the 1880s and is of social and historical significance, particularly for its association with Frank Worsley, the Akaroa born Antarctic explorer and adventurer. Born at 44 Rue Balguerie, Akaroa in 1872, Worsley was the son of Vincent Georgiana Priscilla Fulton and her husband, Henry Theophilus Worsley, a labourer. After attending Fendalton School he joined the New Zealand Shipping Company in 1887 and served on sailing ships between New Zealand and England for approximately 10 years (Dennerly, 2007). Worsley's life was filled with adventure and risk. Worsley participated in several Antarctic expeditions with Ernest Shackleton, and captained the *Endurance*; he is best remembered for navigating the *Endurance* crew to safety in 1915 after their vessel was crushed by ice floes in the Weddell Sea. In what has been described as 'an astonishing feat of navigation', Worsley successfully ensured the survival of the entire *Endurance* party (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2007). Worsley's naval experience led to his involvement in WWI where his efforts in sinking German submarines earned him a Distinguished Service Order. Worsley also spent time treasure-hunting in the Pacific, writing, lecturing and drawing, and he published several accounts of his life experiences (Ibid.). The dwelling at 44 Rue Balguerie has historical significance because it was Worsley's birthplace though not necessarily his own home. Worsley died in 1943 and his obituary in the Akaroa Mail states: "He was born in the house now owned by Mr James H Curry, Balguerie Street, Akaroa" (Akaroa Mail, February 16, 1943).

The dwelling at 44 Rue Balguerie has cultural significance as it demonstrates the pattern of settlement and development of Akaroa.

Despite Akaroa being a melting pot of various cultures, the style of the houses was derived almost exclusively from Britain. The architectural design is reflective of Akaroa's inhabitants through the second half of the 19th century who continued to be people of modest means. Therefore cottages and smaller houses predominate over larger houses, and only a handful of 19th century dwellings in the town can be described as large (Wilson and Beaumont, 2009).

The dwelling at 44 Rue Balguerie has architectural and aesthetic significance that is consistent with other dwellings in Akaroa. The one-and-a-half-storey cottage is commonly found in Akaroa's 19<sup>th</sup> century domestic architecture. The use of dormers or small windows set in an end gable meant attic spaces could be used for sleeping, and this was certainly the case with 44 Rue Balguerie. The dwelling has a pitched roof originally constructed from shingles, which has been replaced by corrugated iron. The street facade includes a simple corrugated iron veranda with minimal ornamentation, and a double hung sash window facing the street. A bay window continues to be an architectural feature at the gable end of the dwelling. Alterations and extensions appear to have been made over recent years to the rear of the house, however these have not dramatically impacted the streetscape view. All these features are representative of a colonial dwelling and the architectural elements are significant in that they reveal the basic design and construction of the era.

Materials used in the construction of 44 Rue Balguerie are consistent with those used for domestic buildings in the area during this settlement period. Timber was plentiful in Akaroa and many of the cottages are of weatherboard construction. Shingles have been replaced with corrugated iron roofing and some basic ornamentation has been added in the form of iron fretwork on the veranda.

The dwelling is of contextual significance in that it is a landmark on the corner of Rue Balguerie and Watson Street and is part of a group of similar dwellings found throughout the older parts of Akaroa's township, notably on Rue Jolie south, on Percy and William Streets and up Rues Balguerie and Grehan (Ibid.).

Archaeological significance is possible on this site as pre-1900 human activity is known to have been present and active. Therefore the site has potential to hold archaeological evidence.

#### **REFERENCES:**

Akaroa Mail. (February 16, 1943). Commander Frank Worsley – an adventurous life.

CCC heritage files and plans

Dennerly, P. Y. (updated 22 June, 2007). Worsley, Frank Arthur 1872 - 1943. *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*. Retrieved 02 March, 2010, from: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>

Ministry for Culture and Heritage. (updated 26 June, 2009). *Frank Worsley and Antarctica*. Retrieved March 02, 2010, from: <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/frank-worsley>

Wilson, J., & Beaumont, L. (2009). *Akaroa Historic Overview: a report prepared for Christchurch City Council*.

**ASSESSMENT COMPLETED:** 03.03.2010

**AUTHOR:** Sarah Dwyer