

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE  
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 598  
*DWELLING AND SETTING –1 THE SPUR, CHRISTCHURCH***



**PHOTOGRAPH: CCC HERITAGE FILES, PRE-2011**

**HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Historical and social values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular person, group, organisation, institution, event, phase or activity; the continuity and/or change of a phase or activity; social, historical, traditional, economic, political or other patterns.*

The dwelling at 1 The Spur has high historical and social significance as the first house built in Samuel Hurst Seager's innovative garden suburb development The Spur for his own use. Seager was at the forefront of architectural and planning theory and practice in New Zealand at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1898 he introduced the Arts and Crafts bungalow to New Zealand with his Cashmere house for John Macmillan-Brown (1899-1900). Influenced by Ebenezer Howard's Garden City movement, Seager's The Spur development (1902-1914) took his ideals a step further and introduced the country's first informal bungalow landscape. The development was well publicised, widely influential and presaged a new, more informal way of life that was to become common throughout New Zealand following World War I.

Arising within the context of a new sense of nationalism, at a time when New Zealand-born pakeha outnumbered their foreign-born parents, and the Arts and Crafts concern with the vernacular and handcrafted, Seager was the first New Zealand architect to articulate the need for this country to discover an architectural expression that could provide a basis for a distinct New Zealand architecture. Seager believed that the appropriate symbol was the country's small timber colonial dwellings, which lead to his interest in the timber bungalow.

1 The Spur (1902) was the first dwelling built on the site and was larger than those that followed. It is recorded that Seager lived in the house for approximately eight years. As he owned the property until 1920 and sold Red House at 25 Armagh Street in 1907, there is some uncertainty as to the years in which Seager resided at No. 1. The Spur bungalows were initially built as weekenders and the booklet produced to market the development stated that all of the cottages had been continuously let at good rentals since their construction. The entire site was auctioned on 14 March 1914, after which Seager put his resources into a new development on Hackthorne Road, Cashmere.

The first Certificate of Title for No. 1 The Spur was issued in 1920 to William Francis McArthur, a chemist of Christchurch (c1890-1974). It was purchased in 1925 by civil engineer Augustus William de Rohan Galbraith (1876-1957). English-born Galbraith was appointed Christchurch's City Engineer and Surveyor in 1925. During his 16-year career with the city, Galbraith reorganised the Works and Sanitary Department on professional lines, and undertook a major overhaul of the city's infrastructure. After his retirement in 1941, Galbraith lived in Perth for a period, but was back living at 1 The Spur at the time of his death. Noted Christchurch architect Peter Beaven was a later owner of the dwelling (1961-67). Beaven, together with Sir Miles Warren, was renowned for developing a distinctive form of modernist architecture in the 1950s, 60s and 70s. In 2003, Beaven was awarded the New Zealand Institute of Architecture's Gold Medal for work spanning nearly half a century, most of it in Canterbury.

The dwelling received minor damage in the 2010/2011 Canterbury earthquakes, with the chimney collapsing. A woodburner with a steel flue has been installed in place of the original fireplace.

## **CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Cultural and spiritual values that demonstrate or are associated with the distinctive characteristics of a way of life, philosophy, tradition, religion, or other belief, including: the symbolic or commemorative value of the place; significance to Tangata Whenua; and/or associations with an identifiable group and esteemed by this group for its cultural values.*

The dwelling at 1 The Spur has high cultural significance as an expression of progressive thought at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as manifested in two strands of influential architect Samuel Hurst Seager's philosophy – his search for an indigenous architectural expression, and his desire to promote new ways of living through architecture. Seager was the first New Zealand architect to articulate the need for this country to discover an architectural expression that could provide a basis for a distinct New Zealand architecture. Seager believed that the appropriate symbol was the country's small timber colonial dwellings, which led to his interest in the timber bungalow. Parallel with this was his belief in the transformative power of architecture and planning to produce a better society. This also contributed to his interest in the open informal architecture of the bungalow, and the progressive ideas of the Garden City movement - which promulgated the idea that dwellings should be integrated with the natural environment. These parallel ideas coalesced in the experimental development at The Spur.

## **ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE**

*Architectural and aesthetic values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular style, period or designer, design values, form, scale, colour, texture and material of the place.*

The dwelling at 1 The Spur has high architectural and aesthetic significance as the first dwelling built in The Spur development, an experiment by Seager in producing a coherent subdivision that embodied his quest to develop a distinct New Zealand architecture and his interest in the English Garden City movement. The Spur was an early attempt at adapting the principles of the Garden City movement to the local environment and it is a landmark in the history of New Zealand architecture and planning.

With The Spur development, Seager wanted to produce a singular integrated vision where all the individually designed bungalows would relate harmoniously with the landscape and each other. Dwellings were carefully positioned to maximise privacy and views. Seager retained the subdivision for a dozen years, during which time eight cottages were built. A further two cottages were added by Seager for new owners after he had auctioned the properties in 1914. Away from The Spur, Seager also designed a number of other cottages for Clifton sites.

All of The Spur cottages were variations on the bungalow style that Seager introduced to New Zealand with his Cashmere holiday cottage for the Macmillan Brown family. Common elements include a compact rectangular plan, low-pitched roof with exposed eaves, vestigial buttresses, battered chimney, central entry porch and panelled rooms with coved ceilings. Seager is also believed to have been influenced by an 1897 bungalow design by British architect RA Briggs; elements possibly derived from this include a segmental-arched entry, hipped roof, cottage-style casements and a faceted bay on the side elevation. Seager produced a plan in late 1901 for a stone version of the timber cottage that was built at 1 The Spur in 1902.

After Seager sold the three-bedroom house in 1920, the new owner commissioned alterations from him. Further alterations were made subsequently, including some by architect and owner Peter Beaven. The dwelling has been extended from each of the side elevations, and a partial verandah has been added to the front. These alterations have resulted in the loss of some key elements, such as the eastern verandah. Most changes however have been sympathetic, preserving many of the building's distinctive features (both internally and externally) and maintaining its essential bungalow aesthetic. The cottage remains one of the better preserved of The Spur properties.

### **TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE**

*Technological and craftsmanship values that demonstrate or are associated with: the nature and use of materials, finishes and/or technological or constructional methods which were innovative, or of notable quality for the period.*

The dwelling at 1 The Spur has technological and craftsmanship significance for its timber construction and the technical accomplishment evident in building on a rocky spur. The dwelling is representative of the Arts and Crafts architectural premise in the use of its timber detailing both on the exterior and interior of the bungalow. Design elements of the house such as the exposed eaves, vestigial buttresses and panelled rooms reveal a significant degree of craftsmanship. Its construction, materials and detailing evidence the period in which it was built and the philosophy of Seager's approach to the unity of design, construction and its place in the wider landscape.

### **CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Contextual values that demonstrate or are associated with: a relationship to the environment (constructed and natural), a landscape, setting, group, precinct or streetscape; a degree of consistency in terms of type, scale, form, materials, texture, colour, style and/or detail; recognised landmarks and landscape which are recognised and contribute to the unique identity of the environment.*

1 The Spur has high contextual significance in relation to its immediate setting, its wider setting as part of The Spur development, and in relation to the suburb of Clifton as a whole. The cottage is located on a terrace cut into the steep hillside. The terrace is retained by a stone wall and a substantial flight of stone steps. The garden surrounding the cottage is informal and closely planted. Although it was the first building on the wider site, the cottage was intended to be an indivisible part of the Spur development as a whole, which eventually numbered eight dwellings in an integrated landscape. The majority of these homes remain today, although in many cases substantially modified. 1 The Spur relates particularly to the other listed property in the development, 5 The Spur, which is also comparatively unmodified. There are also a number of other Seager-designed homes in the wider Clifton area. Adjacent to The Spur was 'The Zig-zag' (Aranoni Track), a later development by the architectural practise of the England Brothers that took Seager's initiative as its inspiration.

## **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE**

*Archaeological or scientific values that demonstrate or are associated with: the potential to provide information through physical or scientific evidence an understanding about social historical, cultural, spiritual, technological or other values of past events, activities, structures or people.*

The dwelling at 1 The Spur and its setting have archaeological significance because of the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, possibly including that which occurred prior to 1900. Sumner was a place of Ngai Tahu occupation prior to European settlement.

## **ASSESSMENT STATEMENT**

The dwelling at 1 The Spur and its setting has high overall significance to Christchurch including Banks Peninsula. The dwelling has high historical and social significance as the first dwelling built in Samuel Hurst Seager's Spur development and for its association with both Seager and later owners, including A W Galbraith and architect Peter Beaven. Seager's The Spur development (1902-1914) introduced the country's first informal bungalow landscape. The cottage has high cultural significance as an expression of progressive architecture at the turn of the 20th century. The dwelling and its place in The Spur development is representative of Seager's belief in the transformative power of architecture and planning to produce a better society. The cottage has high architectural and aesthetic significance as an early Arts and Crafts bungalow in a landmark residential development undertaken by the architect himself. The dwelling at 1 The Spur has technological and craftsmanship significance for the quality of its construction and architectural detailing. The dwelling and its setting has high contextual significance as an essential element within an early 20<sup>th</sup> century residential development designed to foster the

relationship of the buildings to their site. The dwelling and its setting have archaeological significance because they have the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, possibly including that which occurred prior to 1900.

#### REFERENCES:

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PLEASE NOTE THIS ASSESSMENT IS BASED ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF WRITING. DUE TO THE ONGOING NATURE OF HERITAGE RESEARCH, FUTURE REASSESSMENT OF THIS HERITAGE ITEM MAY BE NECESSARY TO REFLECT ANY CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF ITS HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE.

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