

**SCIENCE & RESEARCH SERIES NO.68**

**EDMOND'S RUINS, KERIKERI INLET,  
BAY OF ISLANDS:  
THE STONE STRUCTURE AND  
THE ARTEFACT ASSEMBLAGE**

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by

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# **EDMONDS RUINS, KERIKERI INLET, BAY OF ISLANDS: THE STONE STRUCTURES AND THE ARTEFACT ASSEMBLAGE**

by  
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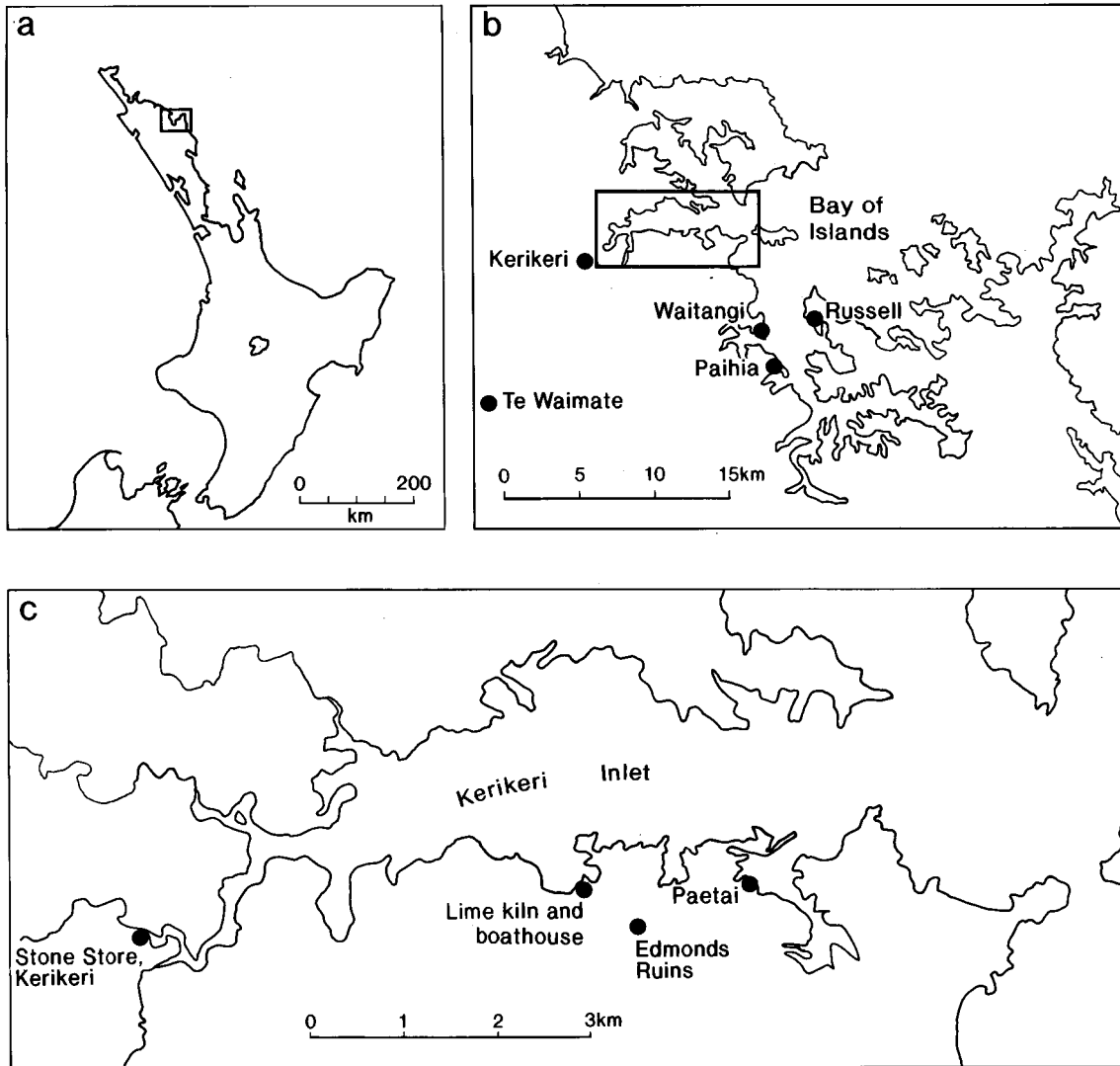
## **ABSTRACT**

Edmonds Ruins are the remains of a mortared stone house with outbuildings, located towards the northern end of an associated series of rectilinear paddocks enclosed by dry stone walls. The house was built after 1840 and before 1858, and was the home of Mr John Edmonds and family. The enclosure walls were built in the same period. The house, already showing signs of disrepair, was destroyed by fire in 1885 or 1886. The outbuilding known as the annexe was still occupied in the 1890s. Inspection of the ruins of the house and annexe suggests three main phases of construction. Artefacts recovered in 1983 during masonry repair work and afterwards with the use of metal detectors, and in 1992-93 from holes dug for a fence and survey marks, are described and illustrated. They suggest that Mr Edmonds established a varied and broadly profitable livelihood based on produce from mixed farming and the sale of bread, kauri gum, and sawn and dressed basalt. The site merits careful protective management and further archaeological research.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The remains of a stone house and outbuildings, known as Edmonds Ruins (site number P5/9), lie in a 2.5 hectare historic reserve, 250 m from Edmonds Road on the south side of the Kerikeri Inlet, Bay of Islands. (For general location see Figure 1.) The historic reserve is managed by the Historic Places Trust (Challis 1987). The buildings are associated with an extensive series of rectilinear paddocks and yards enclosed by dry stone walls (see Figures 2, 5, and 6). There has been considerable research interest in the site and in the history of the Edmonds family over the past 25 years, but little has been published. Referenced historical notes are held by the Historic Places Trust (Burnett 1972; Ross n.d.; and other material in the Sir Alister McIntosh Memorial Library).

The house site lies 20 m above sea level on the highest area of a low ridge trending north-west to south-east. The ridge is a late Quaternary vesiculated basalt lava field with a great deal of surface stone, some of which has been cleared in the construction of the buildings and the enclosure walls. Access to tidewater would have been overland to the north-west. The stone foundations of a boathouse and the remains of a lime-burning kiln



**Figure 1** Maps locating Edmonds Ruins and other places in the Bay of Islands mentioned in the text. a. North Island, New Zealand, showing location of map b. b. Bay of Islands area, showing the location of map c. c. Kerikeri Inlet, showing the location of Edmonds Ruins.

(site number P5/512) survive adjacent to the Kerikeri Inlet 750 m distant (marked on Fairburn 1871; see also Figure 1).

The main house ruins stand to an average wall height of 2 m (see Figures 3, 9, and 10). Immediately to the west of them are the remains of an outbuilding known as the annexe (see Figures 8 and 12). Other stone structures, perhaps the remains of a shed, garden edging and an approach track, exist on the western side, and immediately to the east are other alignments of stone kerbing which probably defined gardens. In a swampy freshwater hollow to the west is a stone-lined well. (For these and other details, see Figure 2.) Also in the vicinity of the ruins are remnants of orchard and garden plantings (e.g., citrus, stone fruit, fig, gladioli, lilies and roses).

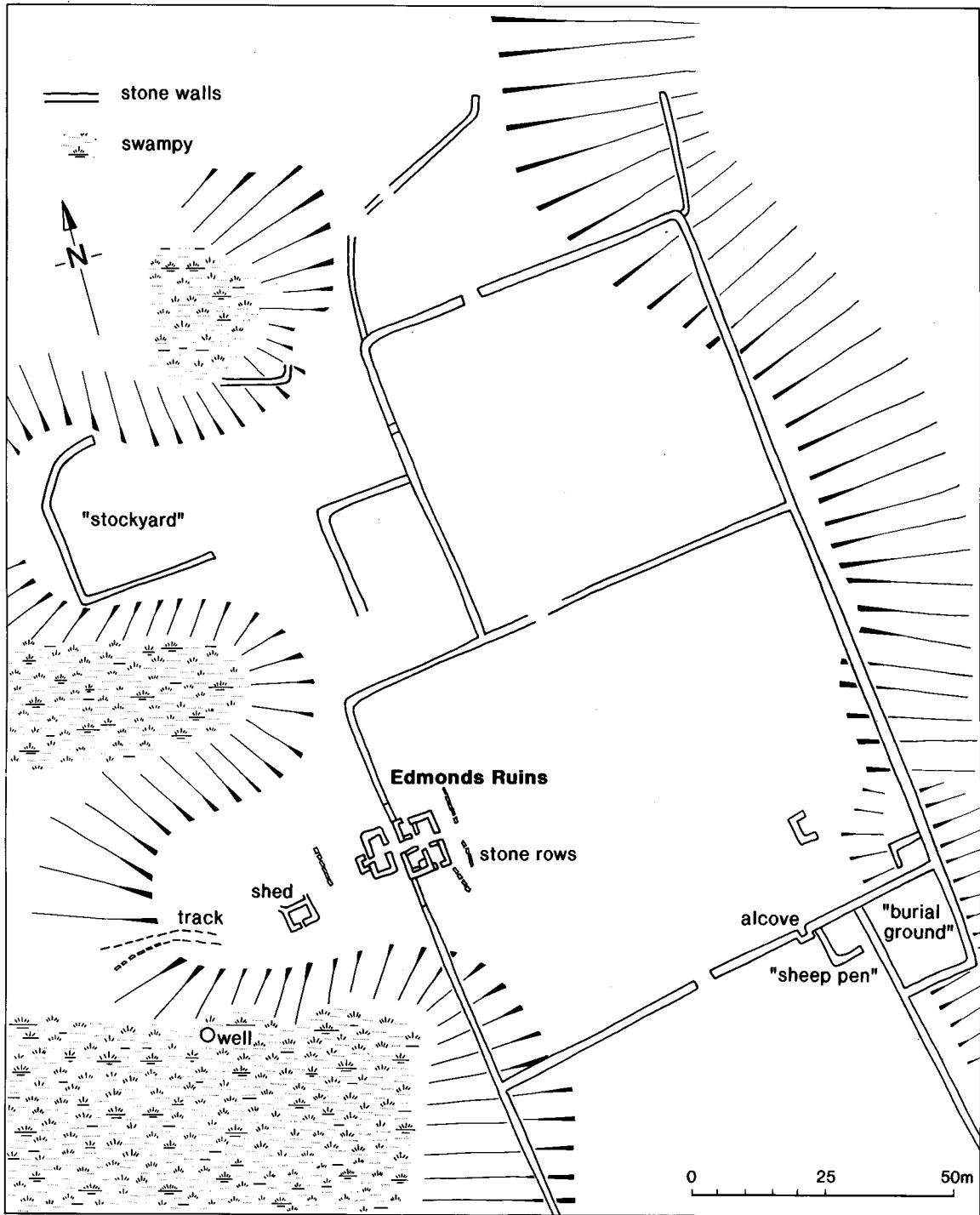


Figure 2 Plan of the Edmonds Ruins area. (For "sheep pen", "burial ground", "stockyard" and the well, compare Figure 6.)

## 2. HISTORY

Mr John Edmonds (1801-1865), stone mason, arrived in the Bay of Islands from England with his wife and five sons in 1834 to work for the Church Missionary Society. There was little need for his skills. The construction of the Stone Store in Kerikeri was almost finished. Eventually in 1839 Mr Edmonds was paid off. (For details, see Burnett 1972; Ross n.d.; Easdale 1991: 78, 132-133, 140.) The circumstances of the family were severe: "... with a large family of seven children and Mrs Edmonds near close to confinement ... I have been ill with a pain in my chest for two months now I [sic] am not able to go to work yet . . ." (Edmonds 1839). "I consider my case very hard, to be sent out here and to be so indifferently received" (Edmonds 1841a). The family of Mr Edmonds grew to 11 children, with two more by a second marriage (Rees 1874).

In a letter to the Secretary of the Church Missionary Society in London in 1839, Mr Edmonds wrote: ". . . I have bought a piece of land ... I am about to build a cottage on the land and that will expend all I have to retire upon. I am going to turn my attention to agriculture ... on the banks of the river on the way to Kerikeri . . ." (Edmonds 1839). In 1838, five areas had been purchased, four of them directly from Maori owners (Edmonds 1841b). The site of Edmonds Ruins lies in Deed No. 4 (Inspector of Surveys, Auckland, 1871b). As a stonemason, Mr Edmonds may have been attracted by the easy availability of basalt on the land. The family lived in uninterrupted possession of the property from 1840 for approaching twenty years (Edmonds 1840; 1857).



(Aidan Challis)

**Figure 3 Edmonds Ruins, east front, 1992.**



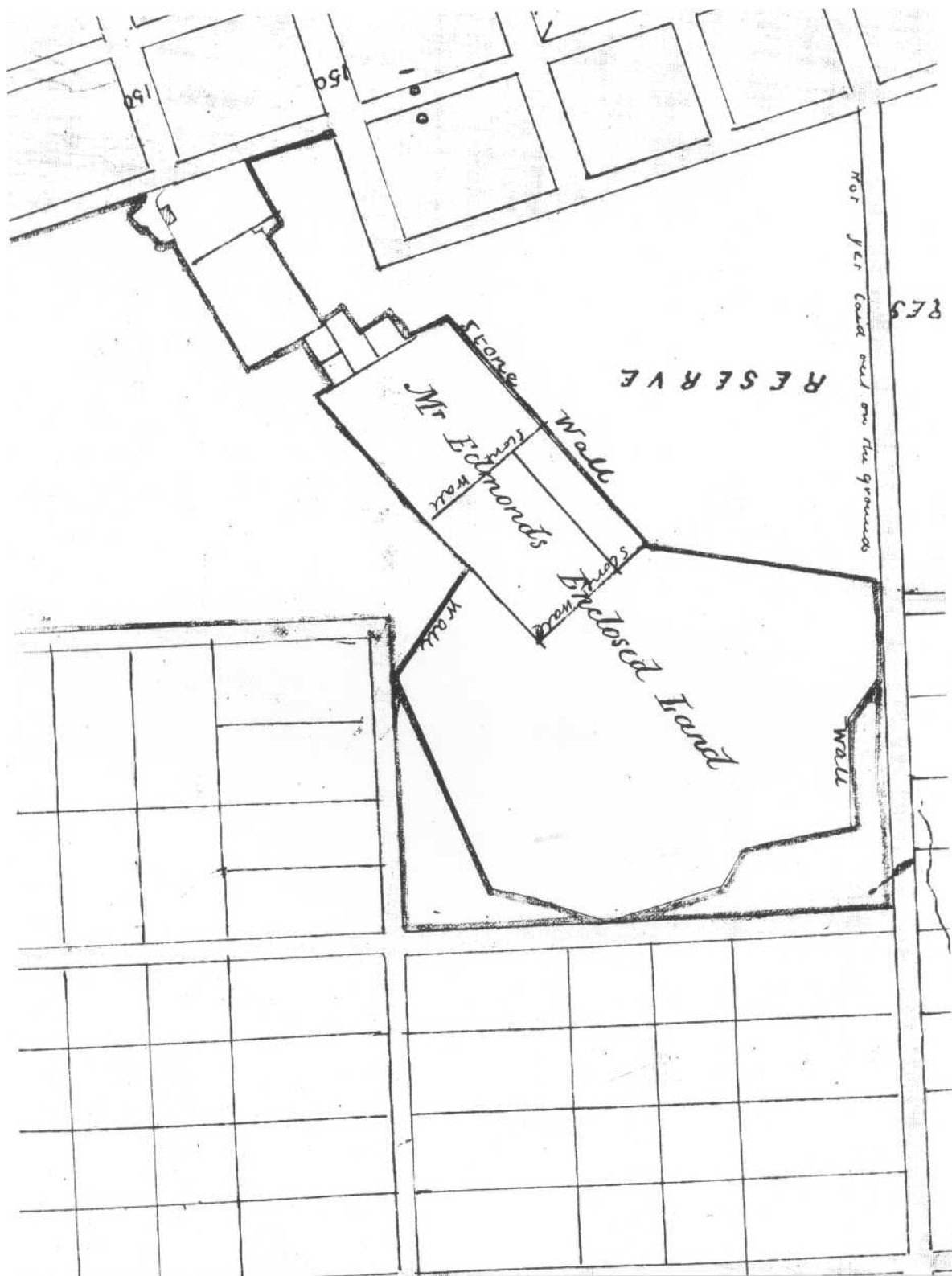
The date when building of the stone house commenced cannot be established precisely. In December 1841, in giving account of his land claim, Mr Edmonds stated: "I have expended on the land described in Deed No. 4 in Building Fencing, Cultivating etc. about £ 500" (Edmonds 1841b). The scale of the expenditure suggests the building of a substantial house. However, the stone house may not have been the first dwelling site on the property. Correspondence earlier in the same year (Edmonds 1841a) was sent from "Paetae", "a native fishing place" (see Figure 1c). Paetai is marked on a plan of the coastline of the land claim dated 1857 (Fairburn 1857). The same location was mapped again in 1871 as Paengatai, showing stone walls enclosing an area marked "was orchard" (Fairburn 1871). Neither survey shows a building at Paetai. Perhaps Mr Edmonds had established himself temporarily near the riverbank at Paetai by 1841. Perhaps he had a small pre-cut timber dwelling there, described as "a House value £40. It was imported from Hobart Town" (Edmonds 1841b). It is concluded that the construction of the stone house on the inland Edmonds Ruins site was the main building operation, and that this may have commenced any time from 1840 onwards.

Evidence suggests that building of the stone house and the associated enclosure walls was completed by 1858. The earliest survey plan showing the house is dated 1860 (Clarke 1860; see Figure 5). This survey was commissioned following a government decision that a township should be established on the Edmonds claim. A letter exists naming Mr Clarke as the surveyor and requesting payment for work done (Mould 1860). The survey plan shows a farmlet of a dozen paddocks and yards enclosed by stone walls. A house is clearly highlighted as a rectangular building with its western



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**Figure 4 Edmonds Ruins from the north east, 1964 (R.I.M. Burnett; Historic Places Trust photograph collection No. 1381).**



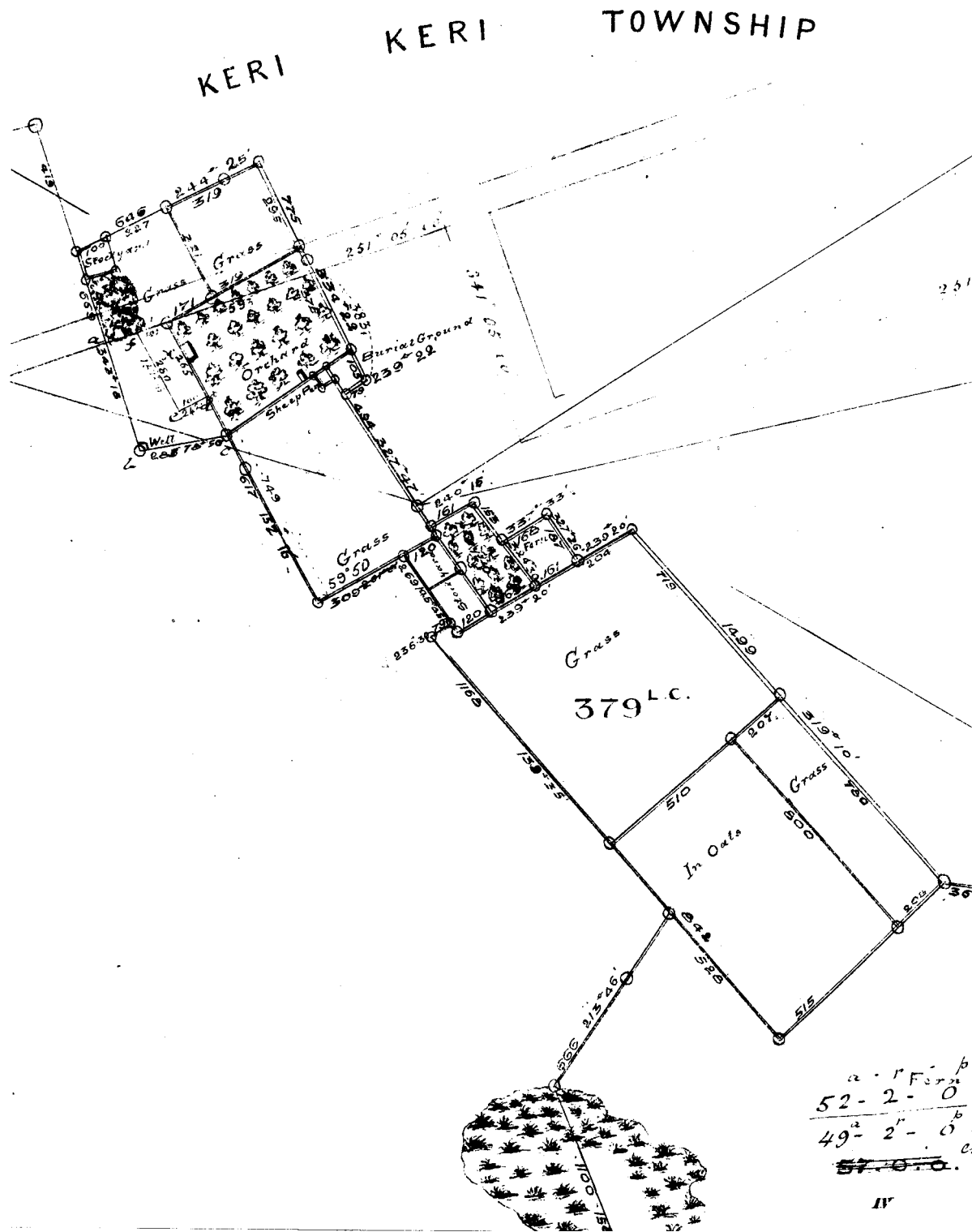
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Figure 5 Plan of Kerikeri Township Suburban Allotments (Clarke 1860). Part of SO 949L.

side in line with the western wall of an enclosure towards the northern end of the complex. The location, orientation and size of the house are consistent with the four roomed structure now in ruins (compare Figures 2 and 5). The government surveyor who inspected the 1860 survey plotted the house in his field book, and reported that "Roads have been carried through Mr Edmonds' property where there is little occasion for such a course, for which compensation will be required . . ." (Sinclair 1861; note the offending proposed road close to the house on the north side, Figure 5). Mr and Mrs Edmonds had been informed of the township proposal in 1858 (Chief Commissioner, Land Claims Act, 1858). In consequence of it no further improvements were made on the land (Edmonds 1861). By this stage there were three homesteads in addition to that of Mr Edmonds on the claim (Clarke 1859). It is concluded that the stone house was completed before 1858. Although the Edmonds land claim had been surveyed twice prior to 1857 by Mr Figg and Mr Fairburn (Edmonds 1857), the plan by Mr Fairburn (Fairburn 1857) shows only the coastline, leaving the Edmonds Ruins area unsurveyed, and no plan by Mr Figg can now be found.

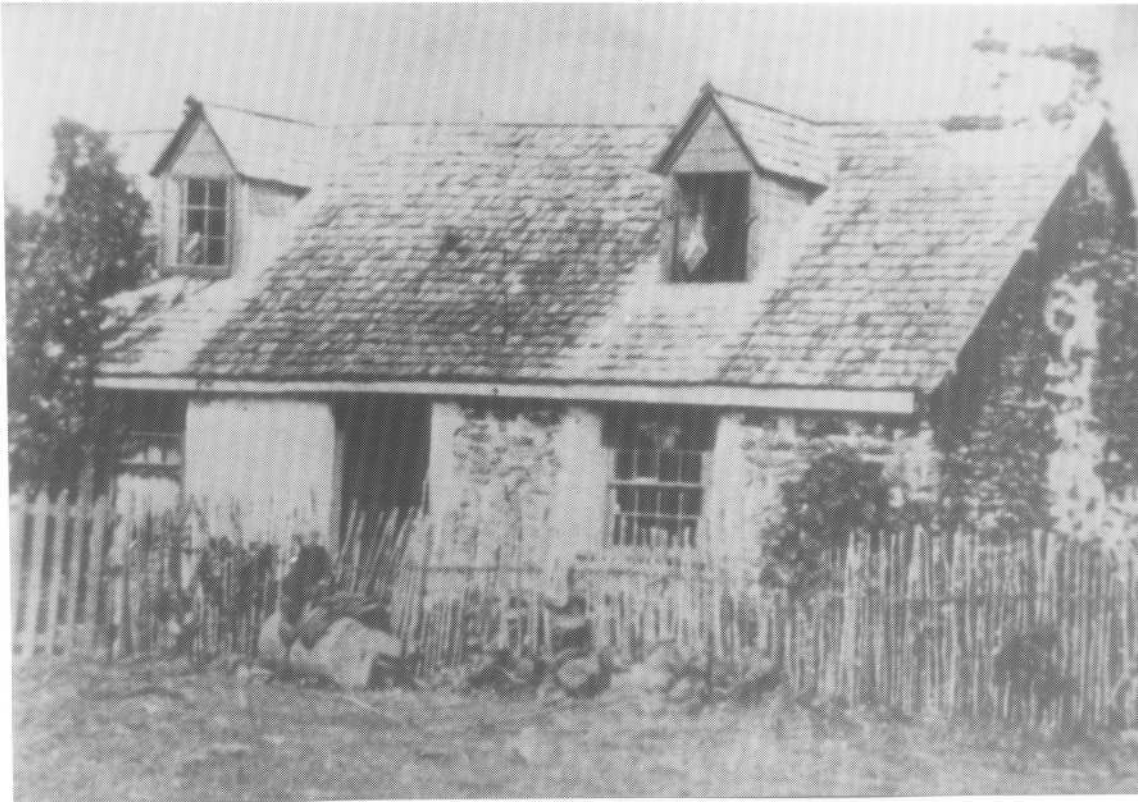
As part of the agreement between Mr Edmonds and the government over the taking of the land for a township, Mr Edmonds insisted that "the whole of the Land that is fenced in by a Stone Wall, being the Homesteads belonging to the families, between 30 and 40 acres, be reserved to me" (Edmonds 1859). In the same year the area fenced in by stone walls at the various homesteads had been stated to be 70 acres 1 rood 4 perches (Clarke 1859; 28.44 hectares). As the precise area was still uncertain, a further survey was commissioned after the death of Mr Edmonds to enable the preparation of the Crown Grant in favour of his descendants, in settlement of the agreement (Inspector of Surveys, Auckland, 1871a; see also 1871b). This new survey (Fairburn 1871) showed the scattered homesteads, the largest of which was that associated with Edmonds Ruins. The plan is shown in Figure 6. The inner lines within the traverses on the plan indicate stone walls (Fairburn 1872). The recorded uses of enclosed areas, variously for orchards, for cultivation of oats, for pasture and for stockyards, indicates a mixed farming operation, with the function of the walls being to control farm animals. The location and size of the house are consistent with the 1860 survey (compare Figures 5 and 6). The annexe, the outbuilding sited to the west of the paddock wall, directly opposite the west door of the house, was not plotted on either the 1860 or the 1871 plan. That it might have been shown in 1871 if it had been present is suggested by the fact that other small structures are shown on this plan: the well to the south-west, and a small rectangular building backing onto the south wall of the orchard near the sheep pen, where an alcove in the enclosure wall remains (compare Figures 2 and 6).

A historic photograph of the house (Figure 7) shows the east front. Details still identifiable on the ruins, including the string-coursed stonework of the chimney top (horizontal bands of masonry, Harris 1975: 480) and the door and window placings, prove it to be Edmonds Ruins. The house appears to be in need of maintenance. The north dormer window casement is missing and some glazing seems absent elsewhere. Additional exterior mortar applied to the outside of the north wall, seen in the photograph, is still present (compare Figures 4 and 7). Concern about structural problems such as slumping, and their effects such as draughts or leaks, could have prompted its application. There is no evidence in the historic photograph of the



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Figure 6 Part of Old Land Claim Plan 213 (Fairburn 1871).



Waimate Mission House Collection, Historic Places Trust,  
courtesy of Mrs Pearl Marsh and Mrs Cath Ferguson.

**Figure 7 Photograph of the Edmonds home before the fire of 1885-1886.**

southern window in the east wall or of the western part of the building. These would have been beyond the margins of the photograph.

The house was destroyed by fire in 1885 or 1886. "Grandpa was burning off and sparks set fire to the roof shingles ... Strangely enough Grandpa had timber stored for the erection of a new house as he felt the old one would not last much longer" (Hague n.d.: 6). (Grandpa was Henry, the fourth son of Mr John Edmonds.) Thirty to forty years after its construction the house was evidently becoming unserviceable. It was not repaired after the fire, which rendered it uninhabitable. However, the annexe, the outbuilding directly opposite the west door, was still lived in during the 1890s.

"It was ... well known in the family ... that Clementine Louisa Strongman, the daughter of Robert Strongman and Esther (nee Robinson) was born July 14, 1896, in the stone outbuilding opposite the kitchen door of the Edmonds Ruin. The main house was then a ruin and the family were camped on the property, sheltering in the outbuilding which Robert had covered with a makeshift roof" (Ferguson: 1984).

Some time in the early twentieth century the buildings were abandoned.

In 1969 the Northland Regional Committee of the Historic Places Trust recognised the heritage value of the ruins. In 1975 an area including the house site and the two northern paddocks of the complex of enclosures was gazetted as a Historic Reserve. In 1983 a programme of repairs to the walls of the house was carried out by a stone mason. All vegetation growth was cleared, all fallen stones were removed and stacked, the interior area was examined with some pick axe work and digging to determine levels and to find wall lines, and walls thought to be missing were reinstated to partial height to indicate to visitors the plan of the building as it was thought to have existed (shown as 1983 work on Figure 8).

### 3. STRUCTURES

The house is built of vesiculated basalt field stone. Large blocks were available. Some quoins (external corners) have been dressed to sizes up to 1 m across, but the majority of the structure is of undressed field stones as small as 60 mm across. Cockle shell may have been burnt for use in mortar at the tidewater site 750 m to the north-west (site number P5/512, mentioned previously). None of the walls has any apparent formal foundation. The bottom stones appear to have been placed on the top of ground soil, with no built basal or lateral support. There has been an accumulation adjacent to the walls of around 250 mm on the outside and around 360 mm on the inside, of loose mortar, rubble, and other environmental material. All walls show a lack of deliberate bonding. That is, the stones were generally laid in stacks, not in horizontal layers and not with the mortared joints between the stones of one layer covered by the stones of the next (Harris 1975: 60). Dressed quoins, where they exist, are not bonded with adjacent masonry. Field stones have been stacked, heaped and tacked on to build the structure. The lack of bonding produced a relatively weak structure from which losses have occurred. Comparison of Figures 3 and 4 indicates some of the losses of the past thirty years.

The apparently poor health of Mr Edmonds suggests that construction of the house and enclosure walls may have been dependent on the younger generation for labour. Substantial juvenile help would have been available through the 1840s and 1850s. The father's English trained stone dressing may be represented in the dressed quoins of what are thought to be the earliest structures (described below) and the dressed facing stones of the later oven (Figure 11). The inexperienced assistance of the younger generation may be evident throughout, but more particularly in what are thought to be later structures.

There are two types of exterior wall in the main house, not including the annexe:

- (1) 750 mm thick exterior walls (shown as phase 1 on Figure 8; see also Figure 9). These stand to their original eaves height of 2.2 m on the west side of the house. The upper parts of the gable ends to the north and south were higher but have partially collapsed (see Figures 3 and 4). There are massive well dressed quoins. Most other stone has been subject to some dressing at least on the exposed side. Parts of these walls retain exterior plastering (seen in Figure 4).
- (2) 650-400 mm thick exterior walls (shown as phase 2 on Figure 8; see also Figure 10). The east walls are fragmentary, the south wall has lost height, and the north wall survives. The original eaves height was 2 m. There are few well dressed quoins. There has been little attempt to dress the exposed faces of field stone. Average stone size is less than half that of the 750 mm walls. There is no apparent general exterior plastering, and the pre-1885 photograph (Figure 7) confirms that it was never present except on door and window reveals and quoins and possibly the section of east wall south of the exterior door (now largely missing).

The 650-400 mm walls (phase 2) are additional to or later than the 750 mm walls (phase 1). On the south side of the building, the short section of 600-650 mm outside