

TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME 'Aigantighe', former Grant residence / Aigantighe Art Gallery

ADDRESS 47 Wai-Iti Road, Timaru

PHOTOGRAPH



(Dr A McEwan, 10 July 2018)

DISTRICT PLAN ITEM No. 12 **HNZ LIST No. & CATEGORY** 3152 / 2
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Lots 1-3 DP 1717, Lot 31 & Part Lot 32 DP 1493

VALUATION NUMBER 2495063100

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION c.1905?

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** JS Turnbull, architect (?)

STYLE Queen Anne

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Two-storey building with an irregular footprint and multiplicity of roof forms. Scalloped bargeboards, finials, decorative plasterwork in gable ends, bracketed eaves. Return veranda on north elevation with gabled entrance porches at west and south. Double-hung sash windows, external chimneybreast on south elevation, hip roofed bay window on west. Corbelled chimneys; ornamental entrance gates west of the house on road frontage. Large-scale modern additions to the east and south.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Brick and plaster, timber, Marseilles tile roofing.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Lean-to first floor sunroom added (date unknown). Gallery extension (Ron Dohig, architect, 1978).

SETTING

The property is located on the north side of Wai-Iti Road, between Selwyn Street in the west and Beverley Hill in the east; it is close by the northern end of Le Cren Street. A mature garden stretches away from the house to the north. The extent of scheduling encompasses the land parcels on which the house is located, in order to protect the setting from inappropriate subdivision, use and development.

HISTORY

'Aigantighe' was built as a retirement home for Alexander (1832-1920) and Ellen (aka Helen, 1854-1955) Grant. Although it is said to have been erected in 1908, Alexander Grant is listed as being resident in Wai-Iti Road in 1905-6. A number of tender notices placed by the architect JS Turnbull in the local newspaper during the period 1904-6 could be for the Grant residence. The Grants had previously farmed Gray's Hills Station, north-east of Lake Benmore. They were married in 1878 and had three children, including a son James who took over Gray's Hills and a daughter Jessie who became a painter. Alexander and Helen Grant named their town house 'Aigantighe', a word said to mean 'at home' in Gaelic. After Alexander's death Helen Grant hosted charity events in the garden of 'Aigantighe' and always intended that her home would become an art gallery; accordingly, she left 'Aigantighe' in her will to the people of Timaru. The house reopened as an art gallery in 1956 and numbers among its collection artworks from the Grant family and from the South Canterbury Arts Society. Additions to the house were made in 1978 and it is now the South Island's third largest art museum (Te Ara). The property has been developed as a sculpture garden and the gallery is open six days a week.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Aigantighe Art Gallery has historical significance for its association with the Grant family, the development of suburban Timaru, and its use as a public art gallery since 1956. The house represents the wealth and social standing of South Canterbury's runholders in the early 20th century and a pattern of conversion of some of the town's large-scale upper-class homes to other uses in the mid-20th century.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Aigantighe Art Gallery has cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of the Grants and the social life they enjoyed while in residence, as well as for its association with the creative life of the town and district.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Aigantighe Art Gallery has architectural significance as the reputed work of notable Timaru architect JS Turnbull. Timaru-born James Turnbull (1864-1947) trained in Melbourne and then established a practice in Timaru in c.1895. The son of Richard Turnbull, a prominent Timaru businessman and politician, Turnbull also designed Job Brown's Beehive Stores (heritage item #117, 1901-2) in Temuka, Chalmers Church (heritage item #38, 1903-4) and a large number of Timaru houses. Turnbull went into partnership with his former assistant Percy Watts Rule in c.1920, after which time Rule was the principal designer in the firm. Ronald Dohig, who extended the art gallery building in 1978, also designed Timaru's Pioneer Hall (South Canterbury Museum), which opened in 1966.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The Aigantighe Art Gallery has technological and craftsmanship value for its brick and tile construction and timber detailing.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Aigantighe Art Gallery has contextual significance as a local landmark within the suburb of Maori Hill. The combination of large early 20th century houses, including 'Aigantighe' and 'Tighnafeile' house (1911-12) on the opposite side of Wai-Iti Road, and more modest, mid-century housing provides evidence of the development of this part of the township. Although now redeveloped as part of an art gallery, 'Aigantighe' retains its visibility from the roadway.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the house post-dates 1900 any potential archaeological significance its site may have would likely relate to the colonial development of the Maori Hill area. Land parcels along the north side of Wai-Iti Road, including those that make up the major part of the art gallery site, were subdivided by local land agent Charles Bowker, of 'The Pines' in College Road, in 1901 (DP 1717). This suggests the land may have been undeveloped until the Grants built their home. An 1882 map of Timaru and suburbs (South Canterbury Museum) shows the future site of the Grant house was previously reserved for a cemetery.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

'Aigantighe', the former Grant residence, has overall heritage significance to Timaru and Timaru district as a whole. The house has historical significance for its association with Alexander and Helen Grant and the Aigantighe Art Gallery and cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of its former residents. The Aigantighe Art Gallery has architectural significance as a Queen Anne style house reputed to have been designed by notable Timaru architect JS Turnbull and technical and craftsmanship value for its brick and tile construction and timber detailing. The Aigantighe Art Gallery has contextual significance as a local landmark and in relation to other notable early 20th century houses in the area. As the former Grant house post-dates 1900, and its site was likely vacant before the family developed it, the property may have limited archaeological value.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

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REFERENCES

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- *South Canterbury Times* 5 January 1887, p. 3.
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- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/3152>
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AUTHOR	Dr Ann McEwan
PEER REVIEWED	xx
REVIEWER	xx



Extent of setting, 47 Wai-iti Road, Timaru.

