

TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME former Customhouse
ADDRESS 2 Strathallan Street, Timaru

PHOTOGRAPH



(A McEwan, 9 July 2018)

FORMER DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. NO. 22 **HNZ LIST No. & CATEGORY** 324 / 1
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION RS 41175

VALUATION NUMBER 2500080300

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1901-2

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** Daniel West, architect; Thomas Pringle, builder

STYLE Neoclassical

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Two storey-building with a square footprint and gabled roof concealed by parapet. Primary, north-facing elevation has a cross-gabled portico framed by pairs of fluted Doric columns. Acroteria atop parapet at building corners, pediments and entrance portico. Double-hung sash windows with pediments over are framed by paired pilasters. Arched entrance above which is the lettering 'HM Customs 1902'. Decorative frieze with wreaths and abstract panels and ornamental relief work encircling round vents in triangular pediments. Only the south elevation is plain and unadorned. Flagpole mounted on portico.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Brick, cement plaster, corrugated iron roofing.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Road reserve at northern boundary developed with hard landscaping and planting (post-1985). Chimneys removed and flagpole added (date unknown).

SETTING

The building occupies a rounded corner site at the intersection of Strathallan and Station Streets and Cains Terrace. Immediately to the north across Strathallan Street is the former DC Turnbull & Co. building (heritage item # 27); to the south along Beswick Street are the former Royal and the Grosvenor hotels (heritage items # 25 & 23). The Timaru Railway Station is to the south-east. The extent of scheduling is the land parcel on which the building

is located; it includes the small gabled outbuilding at the rear of the Customhouse and the historic boundary wall.

HISTORY

A new customhouse was erected in Timaru in 1901-2 to the design of local architect Daniel West. The building opened in August 1902, superseding the office in the town's Post Office where the Collector of Customs had been accommodated since 1880. Previously the collector had been housed in temporary premises in Beswick Street after having been relocated from a building near the breakwater that had to be removed to make way for the railway. The Collector of Customs at Timaru when the new office was built was Charles Nixon, who had been appointed to the post in October 1901. In 1976 the building was relinquished by the government and converted to commercial use. The Timaru Civic Trust purchased the property in mid-2018; it continues to function as a restaurant.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Customhouse has high historical significance for its association with the port of Timaru and the development of Timaru's town centre. The building's location at the east end of Strathallan Street meant that it was handy to both the port and the railway station, something that was remarked upon at the time of its opening.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Customhouse has cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of its former customs staff through the first three-quarters of the 20th century.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The former Customhouse has high architectural significance as an ornate temple style Neoclassical building designed by local carpenter turned architect Daniel West. West (c.1828-1910) had previously been in partnership with Robert Barber (1881, if not earlier, until 1886). Messrs West and Barber designed the Italianate style 'Green Hayes' homestead for John Hayhurst in 1881 (heritage item # 90) and succeeded Maurice Duval as architects to the South Canterbury Education Board in mid-1883. The firm also undertook additions to the Dominion Hotel (heritage item # 36) in 1885-86 and West alone extended the Royal Hotel (heritage item # 25) in 1890. The building retains a high level of external authenticity.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The former Customhouse has high technological and craftsmanship significance for its brick construction and the quality of its classical detailing. Thomas Pringle (1847-1923) was a Scottish-born builder and contractor who spent some time in the United States before emigrating to New Zealand in 1878. Another local contractor, Emil Hall, undertook the concrete foundations and the plasterwork on the building.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Customhouse has high contextual significance as a landmark within the Timaru town centre and for its relationship with other 19th and early 20th century commercial buildings in the vicinity. The concentration of scheduled heritage items and historic character buildings lining Stafford Street, and in the vicinity of the port and railway station, gives Timaru's CBD streetscape its distinctive identity and sense of place. The historic perimeter wall and small outbuilding at the rear contribute to the high level of authenticity that the property has retained over the decades since it was used as a customhouse.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

Although the building post-dates 1900 its site has potential archaeological significance given the property's location close to the railway line and historic waterfront and because a building was on the plot in 1875 (South Canterbury Museum). The property was surveyed as to its current extent in 1976.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The former Customhouse has high overall heritage significance to Timaru and Timaru district as a whole. The building has high historical significance for its association with the commercial activity of the port of Timaru and cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of the building's customs staff. The former Customhouse has high architectural significance as a Neoclassical building designed by local architect Daniel West and high technological and craftsmanship significance for the quality and integrity of its brick construction and classical detailing. The former Customhouse has high contextual significance as a town centre landmark and its site has potential archaeological significance in view of its location and the development that occurred on the property in the 19th century.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

A

REFERENCES

- *Timaru Herald* 2 October 1901, p. 2; 18 October 1901, p. 2; 24 October 1901, p. 3; 2 November 1901, p. 2; 24 July 1902, p. 3; 28 July 1902, p. 3; 29 February 1908, p. 5; 4 May 2018 (available online).
- *South Canterbury Times* 31 March 1886, p. 3; 19 April 1900, p. 3; 21 May 1901, p. 4.
- *Progress* 1 July 1907, p. 340.
- *Lyttelton Times* 17 September 1902, p. 7.
- *Press* 15 March 1923, p. 8.
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/324>
- *Cyclopedia of New Zealand – Canterbury Provincial District* Christchurch, 1903 (available online).
- National Archives.
- <http://www.timarucivictrust.co.nz/activities/the-custom-house>
- 'Public Works Statement' 16 September 1902 *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives* 1902 Session I, D.-1. p. xii.



Extent of setting, 2 Strathallan Street, Timaru.



Customhouse, c.1902. ½-044242-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.