

TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME former Public Trust Office

ADDRESS 41 Sophia Street, Timaru

PHOTOGRAPH



(A McEwan, 9 July 2018)

FORMER DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. NO.32 **HNZ LIST No. & CATEGORY** 3161 / 2
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Pt Lot 96 DP 1

VALUATION NUMBER 2500066900

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1922-23

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** Walter Panton & Son, architects; WJ Harding, builder

STYLE Inter-war classical

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Oversize two storey-building, plus basement and mezzanine, with square footprint and inverted hip roof. Suspended canopy over central entry on Sophia Street (south-west elevation) with oriel window above. Full-height piers frame large, multi-pane steel-frame windows. Bracketed cornice with solid parapet inset with decorative metal panels. Side entry on Sophia Street façade bears date '1922' above door. Decorative detailing on piers and window spandrels. Basement windows on Church Street frontage have metal security grilles. North-east, secondary elevation has lettering 'Public Trust Office' and simplified treatment.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Reinforced concrete.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Unknown, if any.

SETTING

The building stands on the east corner at the intersection of Church and Sophia Streets. To the west is the Timaru Library and to the south-west is St Mary's Anglican Church (heritage item # 50). The South Canterbury Museum, the Timaru Post Office precinct and the Timaru District Council offices (heritage item # 48) are further to the south. The extent of scheduling is the land parcel on which the building is located.

HISTORY

The Timaru office of the Public Trust was erected in 1922-23. A decision had been made in 1919 to replace the Trust's local agency, which operated on behalf of the Canterbury branch in Christchurch (est. 1880), with a full office. Tenders were called for purpose-built premises for the trust in March 1922 and the building was opened on 8 August 1923. Some of the offices on the first floor were to be let to other businesses. The building was taken over by the local agency of Harcourts Real Estate in c.2009 and it also continues to offer professional rooms for other businesses. The Public Trust now operates out of an office in Theodosia Street.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Public Trust Office has historical and social significance for its association with the Public Trust and the inter-war development of the Timaru town centre. The Public Trust was established, by Act of Parliament in 1872, to provide an independent and impartial trustee for colonists wanting to settle their estates in a careful fashion. Although the Trust acted through district managers and agents an increasing workload, and processing delays caused by the need to seek the involvement of the trustee in Wellington, led to a call to change the structure of the Trust. The Public Trust Office Amendment Act 1912 enabled the trustee to delegate powers to Local Deputy Trustees. Consequently, during the 1910s and 1920s, the Public Trust decentralised and built purpose-built offices in regional centres throughout the country.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Public Trust Office has cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of the staff of the Public Trust and the role they played in the financial affairs of their clients.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The former Public Trust Office has architectural significance as the work of successful Timaru architect Walter Panton. Panton (1848-1931) was born and served a building apprenticeship in England. After a period in the United States he reportedly lived in Australia before commencing work as a builder and architect in Southland in c.1895. After a period in Dunedin Panton was practising in Timaru by 1905; his son Victor (c.1887-1946) joined him in practice in 1909. Walter Panton was accepted as a Licentiate of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1911 and both father and son registered as architects in New Zealand in 1914. The firm was also responsible for the additions to the Empire Hotel on Church Street (1906); its most notable commission was arguably the Timaru Public Library and Borough Council offices (heritage item # 48). The Timaru office of the Public Trust is also notable as an example of the corporate style adopted by the organisation. The Timaru building is one of fourteen Public Trust Offices around New Zealand, most in a classical style, that are listed by Heritage NZPT.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The former Public Trust Office has technological and craftsmanship significance for its reinforced concrete construction and the quality of its facade detailing. The Public Trust favoured robust, fire resistant materials for the construction of their offices, hence the use of reinforced concrete and steel-frame windows. William Harding (c.1873-1963) was a local builder who worked on a number of other Panton-designed buildings and structures, including the 1933 clock tower addition to the Timaru Borough Council Offices.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Public Trust Office has contextual significance as a notable historic feature on the edge of the Timaru town centre. Together with the former State Fire Insurance building

(1929) on the north side of Church Street, the former Public Trust Office frames the entry to the eastern portion of Church Street.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

Although the building post-dates 1900 its site may have potential archaeological significance relating to its earlier development and use. An 1875 map of Timaru (South Canterbury Museum) shows a building on Lot 96.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

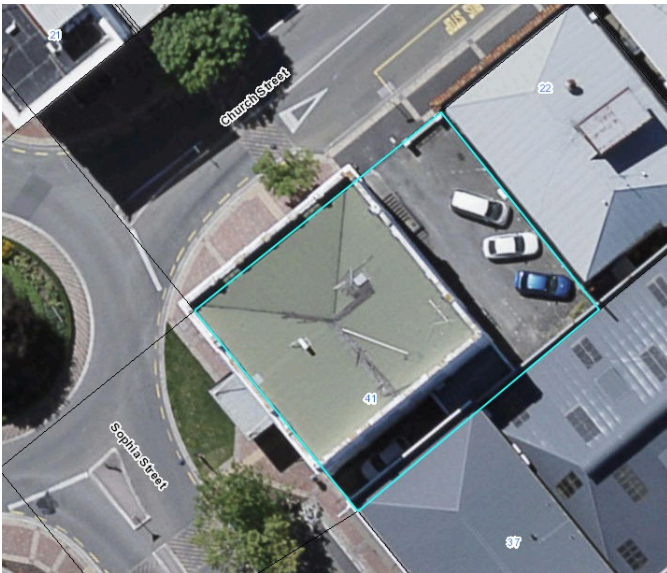
The former Public Trust Office has overall heritage significance to Timaru and Timaru district as a whole. The building has historical and social significance for its association with the Public Trust Office and the interwar development of the town centre and cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of its former staff and their clients. The former Public Trust Office has architectural significance as the work of successful Timaru architect Walter Panton and technological and craftsmanship significance for its reinforced concrete construction and ornamental detailing. The former Public Trust Office has contextual significance for the contribution it makes to the Timaru town centre streetscape and its site may have potential archaeological significance in view of the colonial use of the property.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

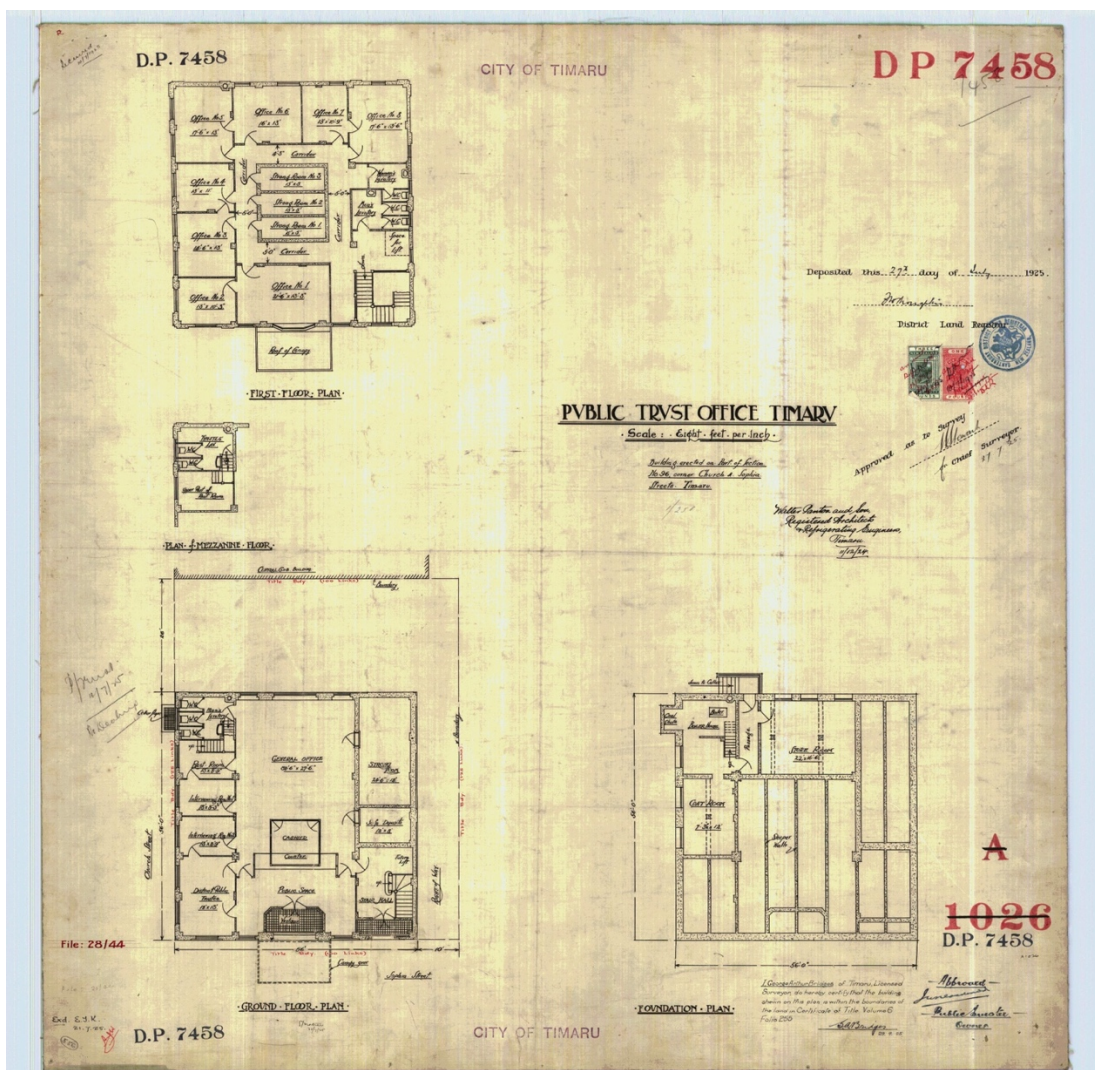
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REFERENCES

- *Temuka Leader* 22 May 1924, p. 3.
- *Timaru Herald* 16 January 1907, p. 6; 13 August 1908, p. 7; 18 February 1909, p. 7; 31 December 1910, p. 2; 2 December 1916, p. 8; 7 September 1918, p. 2; 26 November 1919, p. 2; 22 April 2008, 31 January 2009 & 24 June 2017 (available online).
- *Press* 6 March 1909, p. 12; 9 August 1923, p. 4; 19 May 1931, p. 8.
- *Sun* 7 May 1919, p. 3.
- *Evening Star* 7 March 1922, p. 1.
- *NZ Times* 14 September 1900, p. 3.
- *Progress* 1 September 1913, p. 34; 1 March 1922, p. 24.
- *Mataura Ensign* 29 March 1895, p. 3.
- *Southland Times* 25 January 1896, p. 1.
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/3161>
- *Directory of British Architects, 1834-1914: Vol. 2 (L-Z)* available online.
- <http://sites.rootsweb.com/~nzlscant/Panton.htm>
- *Cyclopedia of New Zealand – Canterbury Provincial District* Christchurch, 1903; available online.



Extent of setting, 41 Sophia Street, Timaru.



DP 7458, dated 27 July 1925. LINZ.