

TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME former Bank Street (Wesleyan) Methodist Church

ADDRESS 38-40 Bank Street, Timaru

PHOTOGRAPH



(Dr A McEwan, 11 July 2018)

FORMER DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. No. 51 **HNZ LIST NO. & CATEGORY** 3155 / 2
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Lots 285 & 287 DP 1

VALUATION NUMBER 2500056900

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1874-75 + 1890/1930

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** Francis Wilson, architect; Messrs Jones & Peters,
stonemasons (original structure)

STYLE Early English Gothic Revival

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Gothic Revival style hall type church with rectangular footprint and gabled roof. Crenelated entrance tower at north-east corner has tall copper-clad steeple. Gabled chancel and vestry at west end. Lancet arched windows, large window in east gable end having delicate tracery. Quoins and cement dressed door and window surrounds. Diamond-pattern leadlight windows and two stained glass memorial windows opposite one another in the nave. Concrete and wrought iron boundary fence. Cross atop steeple and metal finials at east gable end and south-east corner.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Timaru bluestone (basalt), concrete/cement, timber, brick, corrugated metal and copper.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Nave extended and chancel added (Robert Harvey, architect, 1890). Stained glass windows installed (1922 & 1931). Brick vestry and entrance tower added, original entry converted in to a window, chancel and vestry stuccoed (Turnbull & Rule, architects, 1930). Ventilators removed from ridgeline (date unknown). Conversion to current use (1992).

SETTING

The former church stands on the west side of Bank Street, south of its intersection with Church Street. The building is centrally located on its site, which consists of two land parcels. The neighbouring streetscape is light industrial in nature. The extent of setting is both land parcels on which the building is located, partly in view of the potential archaeological values of the site, and includes the boundary fencing.

HISTORY

The first Wesleyan Methodist church services in Timaru were held in a private home in Sandytown in 1863. A site for a Methodist church was gifted by the Rhodes brothers and a timber chapel subsequently built in Bank Street in 1866. This chapel was extended in 1868. A new stone church on the same site opened on 21 March 1875; the chapel was then moved to the rear of the site for use as a Sunday school (demolished post-1930). The church's nave was extended to the west in stone and a timber chancel erected beyond it in 1890. In 1930 a stone entrance tower with steeple was erected; the church reopened on Saturday 1 November 1930. The church celebrated its centenary in 1965. In 1991 the church closed and the building was leased to South Canterbury Funeral Services for use as a funeral home and chapel.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Bank Street Methodist Church has high historical and social significance as the first and oldest surviving Wesleyan Methodist church built in South Canterbury. The church is the oldest in Timaru and its use since 1992 as a funeral chapel is sympathetic to and consistent with its 116-history as a church. The former church has added historical significance for its association with church member Laurel McAlister (1892-1981), who was the national president of the Methodist Women's Guild Fellowship from 1959 until 1962. McAlister was actively involved with the Bank Street Sunday school from 1916 until 1942 and was also a founding member of the Timaru Townswomen's Guild. She was awarded an MBE for her work during World War II in 1946.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Bank Street Methodist Church has cultural and spiritual significance as a former place of worship, as a demonstration of the way of life of local families who worshipped in the church between 1875 and 1991, and for its continued use as a place of remembrance and commemoration. The building has added commemorative value as the site of two New Zealand-made memorial windows, including *Christ Giving the Crown of Life to a Soldier* (1922), which is a World War I memorial.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The former Bank Street Methodist Church has high architectural significance as the work of early Timaru architect FJ Wilson. South African-born Francis John (Frank) Wilson (c.1836-1911) was said to have 'practically rebuilt Timaru after the big fire' of 1868 (*Poverty Bay Herald* 21 April 1911, p. 5). Wilson reportedly arrived in Timaru in c.1855 and not only worked as a contractor and architect but also as a publican, holding licenses for hotels in Timaru and Washdyke in the mid-1860s. Wilson also designed the Criterion Hotel, of which he was the proprietor (1872-73), and the Timaru Main School (1873-74). He and his wife Emily had ten children and although Frank Wilson died in Gisborne in 1911 he was remembered at the time as one of the 'prominent citizen(s) of Timaru in the early days' (*Timaru Herald* 28 April 1911, p. 7). Wilson left Timaru in the 1880s and, after a period spent in Australia, he later lived and worked in Wellington, Palmerston North and Gisborne. Frank Wilson's son Frank was also an architect and his grandson Francis Gordon Wilson (1900-59) became Government Architect of New Zealand (1952-59). Robert Harvey, who undertook the 1890 additions to the church, was a Timaru architect and builder in the 1880s. The 1930 additions to the church were designed by local architectural partnership Turnbull & Rule.

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 (1901-2) in Temuka, Chalmers Church (1903-4, heritage item # 38), and a large number of Timaru houses. Turnbull went into partnership with Percy Watts Rule in c.1920, after which time Percy Rule was the principal designer in the firm. The firm designed St James' Anglican Church at Franz Josef (1928-31) and Rule was awarded a Gold Medal from the NZ Institute of Architects for his design of the Surgical Wing at Timaru Hospital (1936-40) in 1939.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The former Bank Street Methodist Church has high technological and craftsmanship significance as a mid-Victorian bluestone building that was added to using the same material in 1890 and 1930. Harding & Co. were the contractors responsible for the 1930 additions. The two stained glass windows installed in the nave in 1922 and 1931 are believed to have been designed and made by John Brock of Dunedin.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Bank Street Methodist Church has contextual significance as a local landmark and for its relationship with other heritage churches in Timaru, including the Anglican (heritage item # 50) and Presbyterian (heritage item # 38) churches that are located to the north and east of the Bank Street building. The steeple of the Bank Street church is a notable feature of the central city skyline and the historic boundary wall and fencing enhance the contextual values of the property within its light industrial streetscape.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the church pre-dates 1900 its site has potential archaeological significance relating to the building's construction and use. An earlier timber chapel (1866) stood on Lot 287, immediately north of the existing building.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The former Bank Street Methodist Church has high overall heritage significance to Timaru and Timaru district as a whole. The church has high historical and social significance for its association with local Methodists for over 110 years and cultural and spiritual significance as a demonstration of the way of life of past congregations and their clergy. The former Bank Street Methodist Church has high architectural significance as a Gothic Revival style building designed by Timaru architect Francis Wilson, with sympathetic later additions, and high technological and craftsmanship significance for its masonry construction using locally quarried basalt. The former Bank Street Methodist Church has contextual significance as a local landmark and in relation to other historic churches in the central city. The former Bank Street Methodist Church has potential archaeological significance in view of its pre-1900 date of construction.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

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REFERENCES

- *Timaru Herald* 27 May 1865, p. 5; 12 June 1867, p. 2; 20 November 1874, p. 7; 24 March 1875, p. 4; 26 April 1890, p. 1; 12 May 1890, p. 1; 21 June 1890, p. 1; 17 October 1916, p. 7.
- *Temuka Leader* 27 November 1906, p. 2.
- *Press* 4 November 1930, p. 13.
- *Waimate Daily Advertiser* 26 November 1914, p. 1.
- *Lyttelton Times* 13 April 1865, p. 5.

- *South Canterbury Times* 29 July 1881, p. 3.
- *Cyclopedia of New Zealand – Canterbury Provincial District* Christchurch, 1903; available online.
- J Wilson 'Timaru's Collection of Old Churches' *Historic Places* June 1989, pp. 7-10.
- F Ciaran 'Stained Glass in Canterbury New Zealand, 1860-1988' PhD thesis, University of Canterbury, 1992.
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/3155>
- <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/5m1/mcalister-laurel-grace-barker>
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Extent of setting, including the historic fencing on the eastern boundary, 38-40 Bank Street, Timaru.