

TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME

Ross' Royal Arcade / Royal Arcade

ADDRESS

196-200 Stafford Street, 8A, 10-14, 14A, 15-26
Royal Arcade, & 23-29 Sophia Street, Timaru

LOCATION



DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO.
(at time of assessment)

New **HNZ LIST NO. & CATEGORY** N/A

LEGAL DESCRIPTIONS

Lot 2 DP 1110, Pt Lot 89 DP 1, Pt Lot 3 DP 1110, Lot 1 DP 78749, Lot 2 DP 11697, Lot 2 DP 49305, Lot 1 DP 49305, Lot 9 DP 1110, Unit B DP 67660 on Lot 2 DP 64444, Lot 1 DP 64444, right of way DP 1110

VALUATION NUMBERS

2500068300, 2500068400 (part), 2500068500,
2500068501, 2500068600, 2500068701,
2500066400, 2500066200, 2500066100B,
2500068700, 2500066300

OVERVIEW

This historic heritage item is comprised of multiple building lots flanking a right of way that extends on a north-east to south-west axis between Stafford Street and Sophia Street. Initially known as Ross' Royal Arcade, the historic heritage area represents the private development of commercial and retail space in central Timaru, principally between 1887 and 1907.

Comprising a suite of, predominantly, commercial classical style buildings, the Royal Arcade is a rare example of a late Victorian/Edwardian commercial arcade. The Royal Arcade adds depth and variety to Timaru's historic central business district and its conservation in the 1990s demonstrates local recognition of its heritage values. The historic heritage item demonstrates the individuality and consistency achieved by a number of architectural practises using the same commercial classical idiom; the intimacy of the arcade offers a unique urban experience in the district.



Side and rear elevation of former Ross, Sims & Co. building. Dr A McEwan.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION & SETTING

- The Royal Arcade is a pedestrian laneway that extends between Stafford Street in the north-east and Sophia Street in the south-west. It is located in the block bounded by Church Street in the north and George Street in the south and forms a connection between Timaru's principal shopping street and its historic government precinct.
- The right of way running through the centre of the arcade is capped by a modern glazed roof carried on decorative posts. Commercial classical-style facades bookend the arcade overlooking Stafford and Sophia Streets. At its mid-point the arcade is bridged at first floor level; this marks the boundary between the town sections on which the arcade was developed and the point at which the right of way widens at its southerly end.
- The arcade is a pedestrian-only precinct with service lanes, near the mid-point town section boundary, on both sides. Buildings lining the arcade are two-storeys in height and many have cellar or basement levels.

HISTORY

David Mitchell Ross was in business in Coromandel and Dunedin before settling in Timaru in c.1874 and establishing a high profile as a businessman and local politician. Ross was a land broker, valuator, trustee and commission agent; initially in partnership with Edward Tate and then, from September 1877, with William Sims. It would appear that in 1877 Ross acquired the land on which he was to develop the Royal Arcade. He was also a Timaru Borough councillor and served as Mayor of Timaru from 1888 until 1891.

Ross shingled the footpath through the arcade in May 1886 and commissioned a number of the early buildings erected along its length. The oldest building that remains in situ is the former offices and printery of the *Timaru Herald* (est. 1864), which were erected on the Sophia Street frontage in 1885-86. On the opposite corner of the arcade Ross had built the United Friendly Societies' Dispensary building in 1887, the same year in which Messrs Priest and Holdgate erected their new Vulcan Warehouse on the south side of the Stafford Street entry to the arcade. In 1888 Ross himself designed premises for Ross, Sims and Co that were erected at the centre of the arcade on its north side; directly opposite his office building Ross also oversaw the construction of shops and offices, subsequently taken over by Priest & Holdgate, at the rear of the Vulcan Warehouse.



Sophia Street scene showing *Timaru Herald* and UFS Dispensary buildings (either side of lamp of the Jubilee fountain). Priest & Holdgate's yard extends beside the Oddfellows' Hall (demolished), c. 1903. South Canterbury Museum.

In 1902 a single-storey building on the north side of the Stafford Street entry was replaced by a two-storey structure by William McKeown and four years later an addition to the rear of the Priest and Holdgate building included Budd's Arcade Café on the first floor. In 1907 McKeown added four shops to the rear of his building and draper turned land broker Charles Bowker erected Arcade Chambers on the north side, south of the Ross, Sims building. Finally in 1953-54 the former Dispensary building, which had been occupied by the Women's Rest during the 1920s, was extended by Wilmott's Workwear (est. 1930). With the exception of this extension the Arcade was therefore complete by 1907.

Both Ross, Sims & Co. and DM Ross individually were declared bankrupt in August 1892 and Ross's properties were auctioned in the spring of 1893. Messrs Priest and Holdgate bought four lots, which included their shop on Stafford Street and the first floor 'bridge' office at mid-block, but the remaining lots were not sold at that time. The official assignee of Ross's estate was still involved in the arcade in the mid-1930s, at which time Timaru Borough Council took over ownership of the right-of-way running through its centre. Ross's fall from grace in Timaru was complete when he was sentenced to prison for embezzlement in September 1892. After his release he left New Zealand and settled in the United States where he reportedly practised as an attorney.

More successfully, William Priest and Edward Holdgate established their partnership as purveyors of hardware and ironmongery in 1879; the business continued until 1950. William McKeown junior took over his father's saddlery business in 1898 and thereafter erected a new building across the arcade from Priest and Holdgate's building. In 1907, when McKeown added a four-shop, seven-office wing at the rear of his building, Begg & Co's music store moved into one of the new shops, having been a tenant in the Stafford Street building since 1902; by the mid-1920s the firm occupied almost all of the combined building.



Priest & Holdgate building (1887) photographed by William Ferrier, c. 1900.
<http://canterburyphotography.blogspot.com/2008/09/blog-post.html>

Other early occupants of the arcade included William Ferrier, whose photographic studio on the first floor of the Ross, Simms & Co. building was purpose-built for him. The Arcade Photographic Studio was later occupied by JR Stewart; HH Kingham ran a photographic supply store in the Arcade in 1920. King and Coe drapers were in occupation in October 1888 and music teacher R Laidlaw Toshach in early 1890. In February 1898 Albert Prosser announced he had taken over the Cash Boot Shop at one of the Stafford Street corners of the Arcade; in the same newspaper Alex Montgomery, a deputy official assignee, gave his address as the arcade. The architect Daniel West had his office in the arcade in 1895; as did fellow architect Herbert Hall when he commenced practice in 1910. Messrs A Brown & Co took possession of a large consignment of tea for their new shop in the arcade in December 1907 and Brunsdens Fruit Stores was in occupation in the following year. Tobacconist Tertius Munro advertised his business within the arcade for sale in 1925. More recently Boobs, a second-hand clothing store, was a longstanding tenant from the mid-1970s.

Ross's intention to roof his arcade with an arched glass canopy was not realised until the right of way was upgraded in the mid-1990s. The growing interest in Timaru's heritage buildings in the later 20th century was the catalyst for the restoration of the Royal Arcade, which reopened on 31 May 1996. Today the Royal Arcade accommodates retail and office tenancies, just as it has always done.



Reopening plaque. Dr A McEwan.

HISTORIC NAMES

The arcade was named by and for David Mitchell Ross, its developer. Melbourne's 'Royal Arcade' is the oldest shopping arcade in Australia (1870) and there were also 'Royal Arcades' built in Dunedin, Tauranga and Wellington; the name denoting a sense of majesty and grandeur without direct reference to the reigning monarch.



Detail of Budd's Arcade Café window, 1906. James Turnbull, architect; F Palliser & Sons, contractors.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Royal Arcade has high historical and social significance as a rare example in New Zealand of a late 19th century/early 20th century shopping and commercial arcade. Dunedin's older Royal Arcade (1875) was demolished in 1931; the Strand Arcade in Auckland (1899-1900, rebuilt 1909-10) is listed by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Toanga as a Category 1 historic place on the basis that it is 'believed to be the earliest surviving purpose-built arcade in the country'. In fact Ross's Royal Arcade predates the Strand by over 20 years, notwithstanding the staged construction of its component parts. The Royal Arcade demonstrates the late Victorian/Edwardian development of Timaru's central business district and is also notable for its association with former Mayor DM Ross, the *Timaru Herald* and the other early owner/occupiers of the buildings within it.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Royal Arcade has cultural value as a site of community identity, esteem and historic continuity since the late 19th century. The arcade is included in the 'Central Timaru Historic Walk' (see below) and is valued as a unique urban space within the central business district.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Royal Arcade has high architectural and aesthetic significance for its suite of commercial classical style buildings that are associated with a number of prominent local architects and which use a common palette of classical design elements to create a varied but generally unified urban streetscape.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The Royal Arcade has technological and craftsmanship significance for the materials and methods used in the buildings lining it. The use of Timaru bluestone in the basement and ground floor of the former Ross, Sims & Co. building (1888) is particularly notable; as are the concrete foundations, sunk to a depth of over 6 metres, of the former *Timaru Herald* building owing to the infill land beneath the building. Brick is the predominant building material used in the arcade

and the detailing of the 1885-86 former *Timaru Herald* building and the 1907 Arcade Chambers demonstrates the craftsmanship of the major building firms involved in the arcade's construction.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Royal Arcade has high contextual significance as one of the defining urban features of the township of Timaru. The buildings of the arcade constitute notable individual elements within a cohesive group of late Victorian and Edwardian commercial classical style edifices. The narrowness of the laneway creates a sense of intimacy and a unique experience within the central business district.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the land on which the Royal Arcade is located had been developed by 1875 (see 1875 town map detail below), the historic heritage area has potential archaeological significance. The area has scientific value due to its potential to provide further information about the arcade's historic use and development

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

Ross's Royal Arcade has high overall historic heritage significance to the Timaru district. The historic heritage area has high historical and social value as a rare, in New Zealand, late 19th / early 20th century commercial arcade and cultural value as a valued site of community heritage value. The Royal Arcade has high architectural and aesthetic significance for its architecturally-designed buildings by a number of noted local architectural firms and technological and craftsmanship significance for the materials and methods used in its construction. The Royal Arcade has high contextual significance as a unique element within Timaru's central business district. Given the development of the arcade site since the early 1870s, if not earlier, archaeological values may be present; the area has scientific value due to its potential to provide further information about the area's historic use and development.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

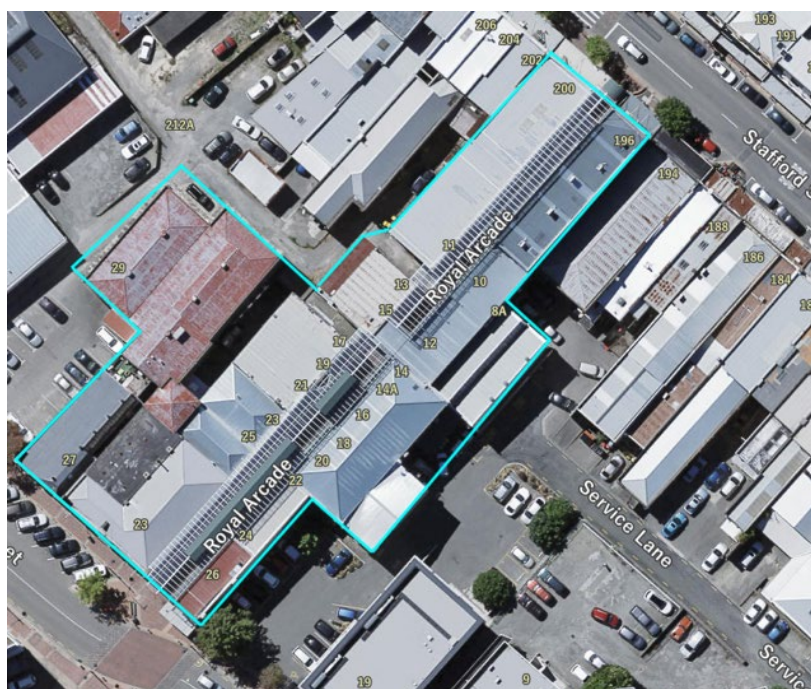
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REFERENCES

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- *South Canterbury Times* 16 October 1879, p. 2; 6 September 1881, p. 2; 16 October 1885, p. 3; 14 June 1887, p. 4; 11 October 1887, p. 3; 5 July 1888, p. 3; 9 October 1888, p. 3.

- *Temuka Leader* 18 August 1892, p. 2; 6 September 1892, p. 4; 21 January 1893, p. 4; 13 January 1906, p. 2.
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- *Lyttelton Times* 29 September 1893, p. 5.
- *Daily Southern Cross* 11 June 1872, p. 1.
- *Otago Daily Times* 23 January 1877, p. 2.
- *Waimate Daily Advertiser* 20 November 1902, p. 2.
- *Auckland Star* 19 November 1888, p. 8.
- http://sites.rootsweb.com/~nzlscant/Royal_Arcade.htm
- <http://canterburyphotography.blogspot.com/2008/09/blog-post.html>
- <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/123>
- <http://www.timarucivictrust.co.nz/activities/royal-arcade>
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- *Cyclopedia of New Zealand – Canterbury Provincial District* Christchurch, 1903; available online.

* See also B Bracefield & D Holman 'Timaru Inner City Heritage Audit, Volume 2, A Category Buildings' Timaru, 1995.



Extent of setting, Royal Arcade, Stafford and Sophia Streets, Timaru.

Individual buildings constituting the historic heritage item



Former *Timaru Herald* building, 1885-86. Meason & Marchant, architects; Jones & Palliser, contractors. Extended along the Arcade (1906, James Turnbull, architect); extended north along Sophia Street (1928); new press room and paper store built at rear (1954). Dr A McEwan.



Side elevation of former *Timaru Herald* building with 1906 addition at rear. Dr A McEwan.



Former United Friendly Societies' (UFS) Dispensary. Maurice Duval, architect. Dr A McEwan.



Priest & Holdgate's Vulcan Warehouse, 1887 (at left) & McKeown buildings, 1902 & 1907 (right). James Hislop, architect & Jones & Palliser, contractors; Vulcan Warehouse. 1902 McKeown's building Daniel West, architect; Messrs Werry & Hunt, builders. 1907 addition, Walter Panton, architect; Palliser & Sons, contractors. Dr A McEwan.



Former Ross, Simms & Co. building, 1888. DM Ross, designer; Samuel McBride (stonework) & Emil Hall (brickwork), builders. Dr A McEwan.



Arcade Chambers (first floor elevation), 1907. Messrs West & Hall, architects; Messrs Petrie & MacDougall, contractors. Dr A McEwan.

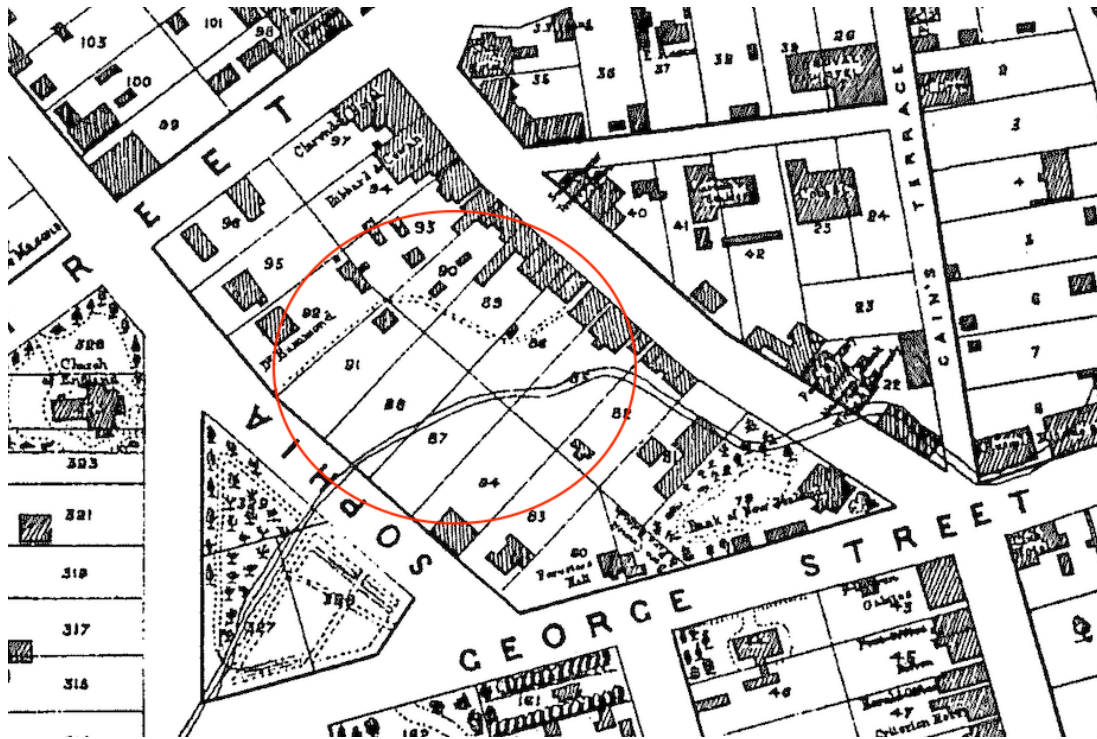


1906 Priest & Holdgate addition. Dr A McEwan.



Wilmott's Workwear addition, c.1953-54. Dr A McEwan.

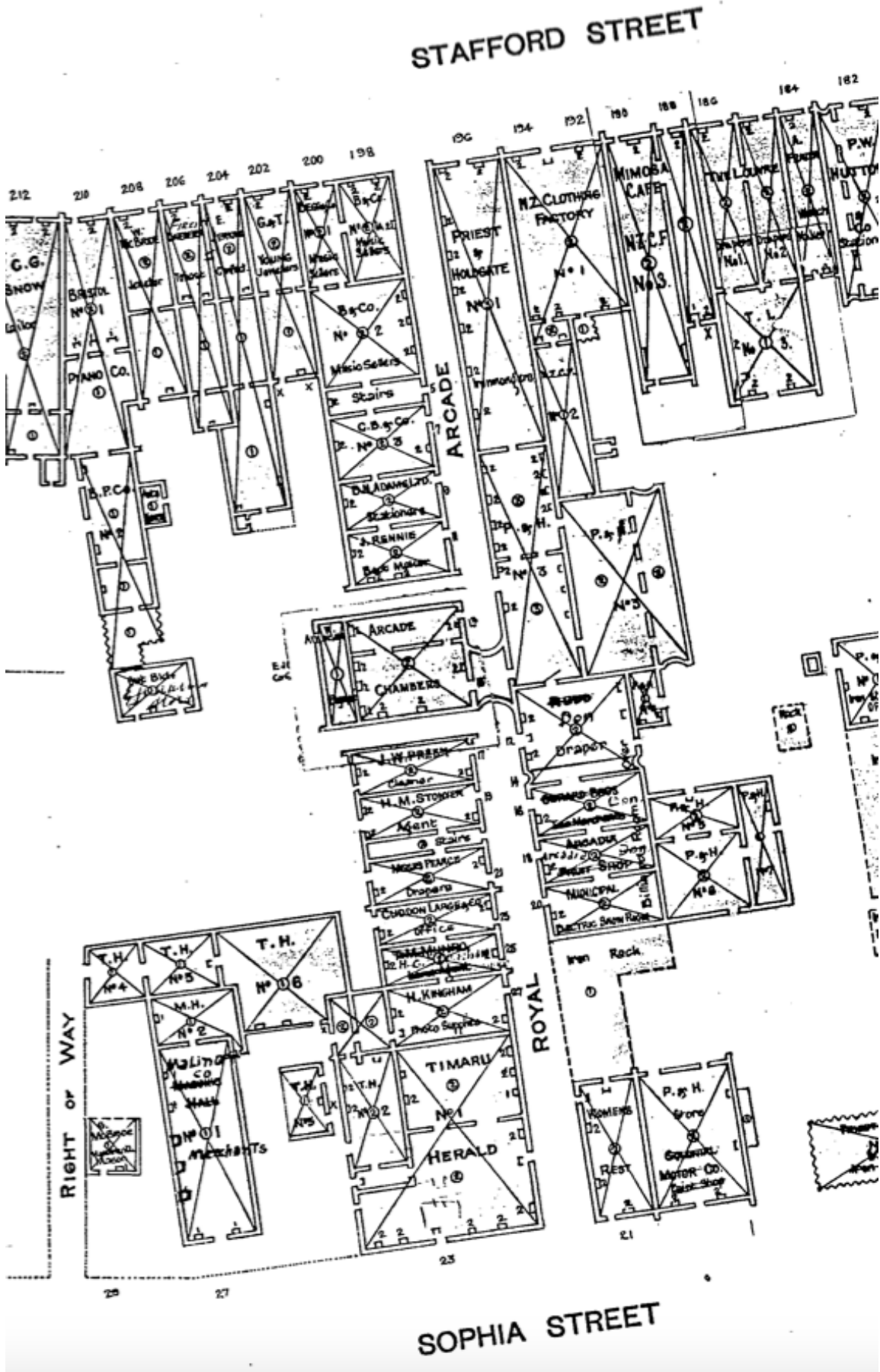
Additional visual information



Detail from 1875 'Plan of Timaru Townships' showing town sections on which the Royal Arcade was developed. Sections 86 and 89 fronting Stafford Street have already been built on by this date. South Canterbury Museum.



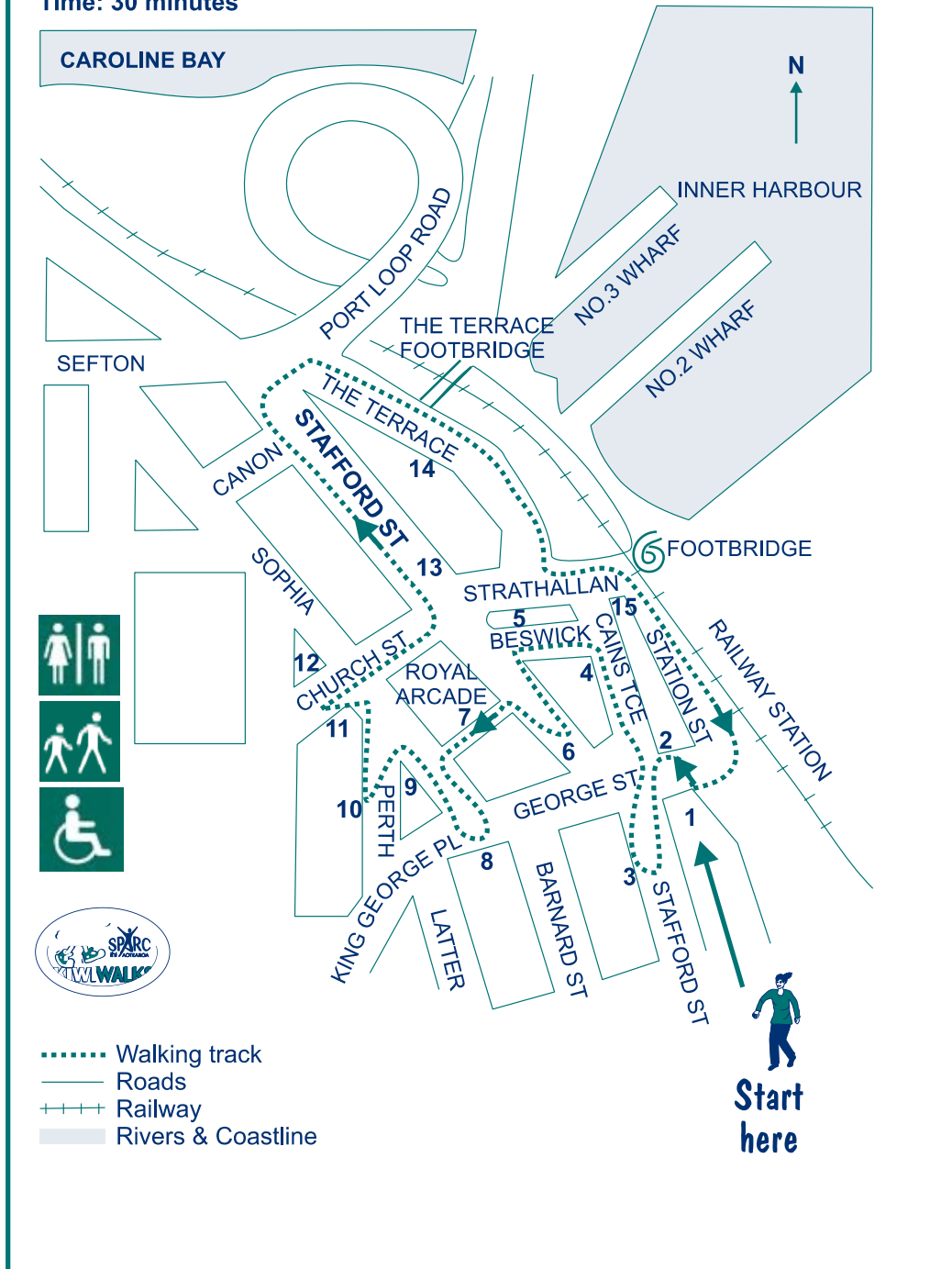
DP 1110, dated June and July 1893, showing state of arcade development at the time of DM Ross's bankruptcy proceedings. LINZ.



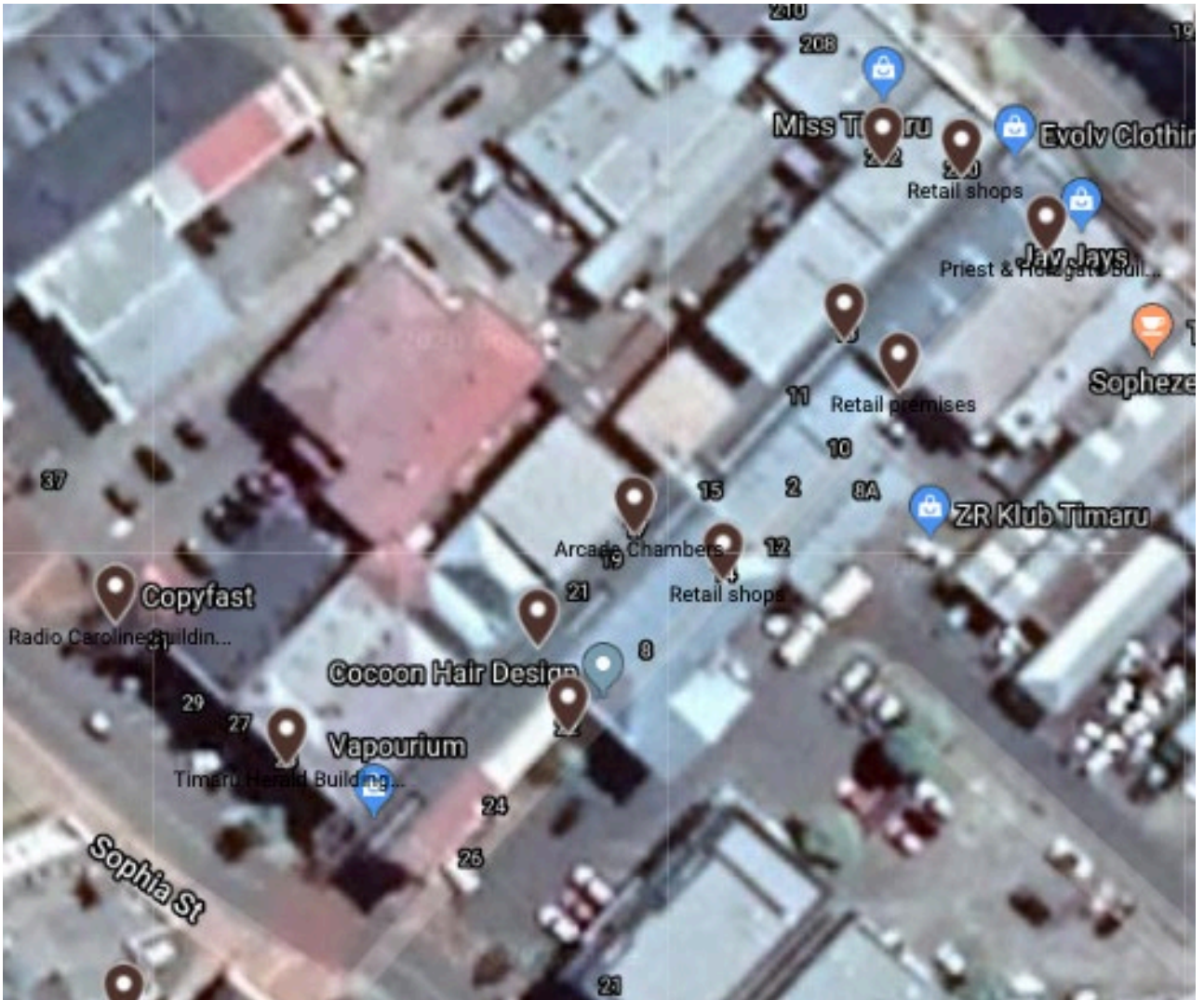
Detail from 1925 Timaru inner-city block plan showing Royal Arcade. Timaru District Council.

No.2 Central Timaru Historic Walk

Time: 30 minutes



TDC Central Timaru Historic Walk; available online.



TDC Built Heritage Google Map. Brown pins mark structures of historic significance and/or interest; 9 pins are located within the heritage area. Accessed 20 January 2020.