

**TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM**

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**HERITAGE ITEM NAME** Sailors' Rest / South Canterbury Seafarers' Centre

**ADDRESS** 19 Ritchie Street, Timaru Port, Timaru

**PHOTOGRAPH**



(Dr A McEwan, 10 July 2018)

**DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO.** New                      **HNZ LIST No. & CATEGORY** n / a  
(at time of assessment)

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION** Lot 2 DP 30907

**VALUATION NUMBER** 2500081300

**DATE OF CONSTRUCTION** 1924

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/  
BUILDER** Walter Panton & Son, architects; Munro & Prosser,  
contractors

**STYLE** Arts and Crafts Bungalow

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

One-and-a-half-storey building with rectangular footprint and hipped gable roof. Principal, nor'west-facing elevation is largely symmetrical with side entry and fully enclosed veranda with board and batten cladding. Hipped dormer with exposed rafters is flanked by pent dormers on principal elevation; pent dormer at rear (south-east elevation). South-west elevation has exposed brick wall surface, north-east has been rendered in cement plaster. Multi-pane casement windows.

**MATERIALS/STRUCTURE**

Brick, cement plaster, timber and corrugated iron.

**ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS**

Veranda enclosed, some new fenestration installed (date unknown).

**SETTING**

The building stands on the south side of Ritchie Street, within the environs of the Port of Timaru. Hayes Street is to the west and Fraser Street to the east. The extent of scheduling is limited to the footprint of the building, rather than the land parcel as a whole.

## **HISTORY**

The first Sailors' Rest for visiting seamen to the port of Timaru opened in December 1895. As was the case in other ports around New Zealand, the local members of the Women's Christian Temperance Movement (WCTU) established the Sailors' Rest to provide a hospitable environment removed from the temptations of alcohol. The WCTU also established rests in Dunedin (1888, revival of 1872 rest), Lyttelton (1893), Greymouth, Westport, Napier, Nelson, Bluff and New Plymouth. Of that number all but the ports at Greymouth, Westport and New Plymouth continue to provide Seafarers' Centres. Initially Timaru sailors coming to the rest gathered in the Assembly Rooms but in late 1897 the organisation acquired the use of the former Harbour Board offices at the port; these facilities were extended in 1900. The Sailors' Rest building stood between the railway lines and the new Harbour Board Office, in the vicinity of where the Port Loop Road meets Ritchie Street today; it was also the venue for WCTU meetings. A new rest built further east along Wharf (Ritchie) Street was opened by the Governor-General, Viscount Jellicoe, on 16 October 1924. The event was part of Jellicoe's farewell tour of the South Island before he relinquished his post. The Timaru Borough Council had contributed £100 to the construction of the building, the architects provided their services free of charge, and the Harbour Board gifted the site. Mary Bray Woodward had charge of the Sailors' Rest from c.1918 until her death in 1950. She was reportedly known as 'Mum' by the freighter crews who visited Timaru during that period. In 1966 the WCTU handed over management of the rest to the South Canterbury Seafarers' Welfare Society, which is affiliated with the Seafarers' Welfare Board (est. 1964). The organisation continues to operate from the rest today.

## **HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Sailors' Rest has high historical and social significance for its association with Timaru Port, the local branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Movement (est. in New Zealand in 1885) and the international provision of social services to visiting seamen. It appears to be the oldest purpose-built Sailor's Rest in the country that is still in use as a rest. The WCTU was involved in social welfare endeavours but is arguably best-known for its promotion of women's suffrage, which led to New Zealand being the first country in the world to grant women the vote in 1893.

## **CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Sailors' Rest has cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of the port's visiting seamen and the people who have helped to support them since 1924.

## **ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE**

The Sailors' Rest has architectural significance as a work of successful Timaru architectural practice Walter Panton & Son. Walter 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) and the Public Trust Office in Sophia Street (heritage item # 32); its most notable commission was arguably the Timaru Public Library and Borough Council offices (heritage item # 48). Victor Panton added the clocktower to the latter in 1933-34 and designed the Caroline Bay Soundshell in 1936 (heritage item # 14). Although the veranda has been enclosed the Sailors' Rest retains a good level of authenticity.

## **TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE**

The Sailors' Rest has craftsmanship value for its brick masonry construction and detailing. Munro and Prosser were a local building firm with premises in Cannon Street.

## CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Sailors' Rest has contextual significance as a local historic feature within the environs of Timaru Port. The building's residential character sets it apart from the industrial buildings of the port, signalling its function as a home away from home for the visiting seamen.

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the building post-dates 1900 and stands on reclaimed land the site's potential archaeological values are likely to be limited.

## SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The Sailors' Rest / South Canterbury Seafarers' Centre has overall significance to Timaru and Timaru district as a whole. The building has high historical and social significance for its association with the Timaru branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Movement and its likely status as the oldest purpose-built Sailors' Rest in New Zealand that is still in use. The Sailors' Rest has cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of Timaru Port's seamen and the people who have helped to provide for them over the years and architectural significance as an Arts and Crafts bungalow design by noted Timaru architectural firm Walter Panton & Son. The Sailors' Rest has craftsmanship value for its brick masonry construction and detailing and contextual significance as a distinctive historic feature within the port environs. As the building is sited on reclaimed land and post-dates 1900 its site likely has limited potential archaeological values.

## HERITAGE CATEGORY

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## REFERENCES

- *Timaru Herald* 3 May 1898, p. 3; 4 July 1900, p. 3; 27 October 1900, p. 1; 3 April 1920, p. 5; 21 May 2016 & 28 May 2016 (available online).
- *Gisborne Herald* 12 May 1950, p. 6.
- *Press* 2 August 1923, p. 4; 2 October 1924, p. 8; 19 December 1924, p. 6; 27 June 1927, p. 6.
- *Otago Daily Times* 3 November 2014 (available online).
- *South Canterbury Times* 8 February 1896, p. 3; 5 April 1897, p. 2; 16 March 1900, p. 4; 27 December 1900, p. 2.
- *Hawera & Normanby Star* 17 October 1924, p. 6.
- *Auckland Star* 21 August 1925, p. 10.
- <http://swb.co.nz/seafarers-centres-in-new-zealand/>
- <https://wctu.org.nz/history/>
- <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/women-together/new-zealand-womens-christian-temperance-union>
- <http://www.lytteltonmuseum.co.nz/through-the-glass-ceiling/>
- [https://www.otago.ac.nz/library/Scottish\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.otago.ac.nz/library/Scottish_Guide.pdf)



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