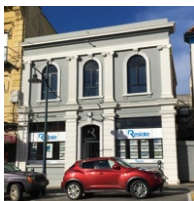


TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME former South Canterbury Times / former Geraldine/Levels County Council building

ADDRESS 16 Church Street, Timaru

PHOTOGRAPH



(A McEwan, 9 July 2018)

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

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Lot 1 DP 20652

VALUATION NUMBER 2500067100

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1884

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** Messrs West & Barber, architects; George Hornsey,
contractor

STYLE Commercial classicism

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Two-storey building with an irregular rectangular footprint and hipped roof. Symmetrical façade has recessed entry beneath arched opening with keystone. Rusticated pilasters frame ground floor bays; entry flanked by large windows. String course between floors; three arched windows with ornamental keystones on first floor are framed by fluted pilasters with Ionic capitals. Dentilled cornice with solid parapet. Narrow alleyway on west wide accessed via timber gate. Single-storey lean-to at rear.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Brick, plastered cement, corrugated metal roofing.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Classical ornamentation added to façade; arched window on east side of main entry replaced by large window; fenestration replaced with metal sashes (date unknown).

SETTING

The building stands on the south side of Church Street, mid-way between Sophia Street in the west and Stafford Street in the east. The former Empire Hotel is immediately to the east and further to the west is the former Public Trust office (heritage item # 32). The extent of scheduling is the land parcel on which the building is located.

HISTORY

In 1884 EG Kerr erected a building to house the *South Canterbury Times* newspaper, of which he was the proprietor. Previously the newspaper (est. 1873) had occupied other premises, including Lane's Buildings on the other side of Church Street. Kerr (1845-1906), a former Mayor of Kaiapoi, had bought the paper from Robert Stansell in August 1881; six years later he acquired the *Timaru Herald* (est. 1864). The *South Canterbury Times* closed in 1901 and the *Herald* became a limited liability company, with Kerr as its first general manager, in December 1905; the Kerr family then published the *Herald* for another 80 years. The Levels County Council was established in 1894 and on 1 February 1895 it took over the offices of the Geraldine County Council (est. 1876) in Church Street. The GCC had been in the former SCT building since at least 1891, Kerr having transferred the *Times* to the *Herald's* Sophia Street premises in 1887. The LCC's territory was bounded by the Opihi River in the north, the Tengawai (sic) River and Pareora and Cave Roads in the west, the coastline in the east and the Pareora River in the south. Timaru Borough was separate from the county, although both councils had their headquarters in Timaru. At the turn of the 20th century the population of Levels County was in the region of 5,500 with 1700 ratepayers. At that time the council occupied the ground floor of the building in Church Street with tenants on the first floor. In January 1923 the newly constituted South Canterbury Electric Power Board met for the first time in the county council offices. After the merger of the Geraldine and Levels County Councils in 1974 the Church Street property was vacated by the council and it has been in private commercial use since that time.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Levels County Council building has historical and social significance for its association with EG Kerr, the *South Canterbury Times* and the administration of local government in the district for over 80 years.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Levels County Council building has cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of the newspaper and local government staff who occupied the building, in addition to its early commercial tenants.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The former Levels County Council building has architectural significance as the work of Timaru firm West and Barber. Local carpenter turned architect Daniel West (c.1828-1910) was in partnership with Robert Barber from 1881 until 1886. The practice designed the Italianate style 'Green Hayes' homestead at Temuka 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 Timaru's Dominion Hotel (heritage item # 36) in 1885-86. West alone extended the Royal Hotel (heritage item # 25) in Timaru in 1890 and later designed the Timaru Customhouse (heritage item # 22, 1901-2). A photograph of the former Levels County Council building in c.1888 (see below) shows that the classical ornamentation on the facade was a later addition. The designer and date of that alteration, which nevertheless preserved the overall classical composition of the façade, is currently unknown.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The former Levels County Council building has technological and craftsmanship value for its late Victorian construction and later decorative detailing.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Levels County Council building has contextual value for the contribution it makes to the historic character of the town centre. The concentration of scheduled heritage items and historic character buildings lining Stafford Street, and in the vicinity of the port, railway station and governmental precinct, gives Timaru's principal CBD its distinctive identity and sense of place. The building is also associated with 'Harlau', the former Kerr residence in Beaconsfield Road, Salisbury (1890) and, historically, with the present-day *Timaru Herald* offices in Sophia Street.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the building pre-dates 1900 its site has potential archaeological significance.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The former South Canterbury Times / former Geraldine/Levels County Council building has overall heritage significance to Timaru and Timaru district as a whole. The building has historical significance for its association with EG Kerr, the *South Canterbury Times* and its history of local government use. The former Levels County Council building has cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of those who have worked in the building and architectural significance as a commercial classical design by Messrs West & Barber. The former Levels County Council building has technological and craftsmanship value for its brick construction and classical detailing and contextual value for its contribution to the historic streetscape of the town centre. The building's site has potential archaeological significance in view of its pre-1900 construction.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

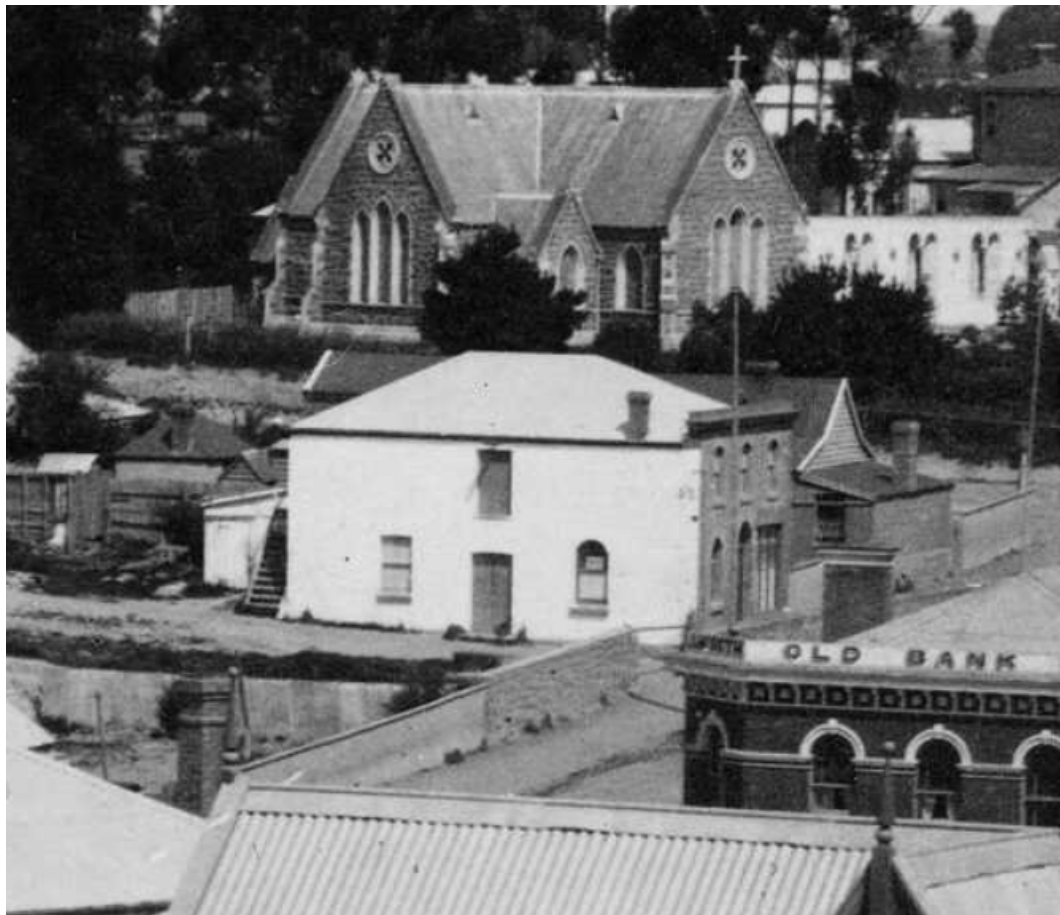
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REFERENCES

- *Timaru Herald* 15 August 1881, p. 2; 9 August 1887, p. 2; 13 July 1893, p. 2; 17 October 1906, p. 5; 4 July 2015 (available online).
- *South Canterbury Times* 20 November 1879, p. 2; 22 July 1880, p. 3; 9 June 1884, p. 3; 20 June 1884, p. 2; 2 February 1886, p. 4; 14 May 1887, p. 3; 14 December 1887, p. 3; 30 January 1895, p. 3.
- *Star* 16 October 1906, p. 3.
- *West Coast Times* 3 July 1884, p. 2.
- *Waikato Times* 17 October 1906, p. 2.
- *NZ Herald* 17 October 1906, p. 8.
- *Cyclopedia of New Zealand – Canterbury Provincial District* Christchurch, 1903 (available online).
- Archives New Zealand.



Extent of setting, 16 Church Street, Timaru.



View of building before the extension of the Empire Hotel and the added classical detailing on the facade, c. 1888. ½-031035-F, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.