

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

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**HERITAGE ITEM NAME** former Timaru Public Library and Borough Council Municipal Offices / Timaru District Council Offices facade

**ADDRESS** 2 King George Place, Timaru

**PHOTOGRAPH**



(A McEwan, 9 July 2018)

**FORMER DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO.** HHI62      **HNZ LIST No. & CATEGORY** 2075 / 2  
(at time of assessment)

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION** Lots 1-3 DP 1490

**VALUATION NUMBER** 2500053000

**DATE OF CONSTRUCTION** 1908-9, 1911-12 + later additions

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/  
BUILDER** Walter Panton & Son, architects; Messrs Werry & Hunt (library) & BR Tooth & Son (municipal offices), builders

**STYLE** Renaissance palazzo

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

Ornamental façade on two-storey building with L-shaped footprint and varied roof forms. Modern additions to the east. Principal elevation (north-facing) has centre and ends composition with central clocktower; first floor balcony over an arched opening on the ground floor. Balcony motif is repeated at the centre of eastern bay. Solid parapet, arch-headed windows on first floor, rusticated ground floor with engaged columns flanking entries. Recessed central bay has segmental and semi-circular pediments over first floor windows. Southern section of shorter, west-facing elevation is set back slightly. Ventilation grilles set within the base of the building feature the architect's name. Frieze carries words 'Municipal Offices' and 'Public Library' in relief.

**MATERIALS/STRUCTURE**

Bluestone foundation, Oamaru stone façade with Scotch granite columns, reinforced concrete.

**ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS**

Additions in matching style to library (1913-14) and to council offices (1926-27). Clocktower erected (Victor Panton, architect; WJ Harding, builder; 1933-34). Lamp of Remembrance installed atop clock-tower (1946). Additions to east end (1958). Pediments and parapet

ornamentation removed (1962). Library converted to offices (1979); new offices and council chambers erected to the east (1983). Building rebuilt behind stone facades (2005).

## **SETTING**

The building stands on the east corner at the intersection of King George Place and Latter Street. To the north is the Timaru Post Office precinct and the South Canterbury Museum is beyond that to the north-west. A cluster of residential buildings is to the south-west and to the east, along George Street, is the Timaru Railway Station and Stafford Street. The extent of scheduling is limited to the footprint of the building defined by its historic facades, rather than the council offices as a whole. This is consistent with the HNZPT list entry.

## **HISTORY**

Timaru's Carnegie Library was erected by the Borough Council in 1908-9, one of eighteen built in New Zealand with funding provided by the American steel magnate and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. The library replaced the Mechanics' Institute (est. 1864), which was located in North Street and sold to help finance the new building. Originally the library was five bays long on its King George Place frontage and six on the elevation overlooking Latter Street. It was officially opened on 3 June 1909 and Mayor James Craigie was hailed at the time as the driving force behind the library's construction. 15% of the population were members within two years of the library's opening and by 1934 that figure had increased to almost 30%. Average library membership across New Zealand, Australia and Britain at this time was 10%, according to historian Susan Liebich. In April 1913 Evelyn Culverwell was appointed chief librarian, the first woman appointed to this position in New Zealand. The Timaru Borough Council erected municipal offices next to the library in 1911-12, both elements of the building were extended in the mid-1910s and mid-1920s respectively. A reinforced concrete clocktower was added in 1933-34 following a design competition held by the council. It was built to house a clock donated by Mayor Craigie in 1913 that had previously been housed in the Post Office across the road. A new library opened in 1979, after which time the building was fully occupied by the council. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century Timaru District Council demolished the original library and municipal offices, retaining the two façades of the historic building and rebuilding within its envelope. The building remains the headquarters of Timaru District Council today.

## **HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The façade of the Timaru District Council offices has historical and social significance for its association with the town's civic infrastructure, with the Carnegie library construction programme, and as one of the earliest free public libraries in New Zealand.

## **CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The façade of the Timaru District Council offices has cultural value as a valued reminder of the provision of free library services in Timaru since 1909 and its association with the staff and elected officials of Timaru town and district since 1912. The building also has a commemorative function in regard to the World War II memorial Lamp of Remembrance installed in 1946.

## **ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE**

The façade of the Timaru District Council offices has architectural significance as the work of successful Timaru architect Walter Panton. Panton (1848-1931), who won the 1907 design competition for the Timaru Town Hall project, including a library and municipal offices, 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 former Public Trust Office in Sophia Street (1922-23, heritage items # 32). The façade of the Timaru District Council offices demonstrates the typical classical styling of early 20<sup>th</sup> century Carnegie libraries throughout the United States and internationally.

### **TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE**

The façade of the Timaru District Council offices has technological and craftsmanship significance for its stone construction and the quality of its classical detailing. Timaru builder William Henry Hunt was in partnership with William Werry from 1895. Werry and Hunt erected a number of commercial buildings in central Timaru as well as undertaking extensive water-race construction in the North Island. The firm also erected Thomson's Coronation Buildings (1902, heritage item # 34) and the former Hay's Buildings in 1907-8 (heritage item # 29). Local stonemason Samuel McBride undertook the stonework for the original library building; McBride also designed and manufactured Timaru's Troopers' Memorial (1904, heritage item # 18).

### **CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The façade of the Timaru District Council offices has contextual significance as a notable historic feature on the edge of the Timaru town centre. The building forms a civic and governmental precinct with the post office precinct on the north side of King George Place.

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE**

As the building post-dates 1900 its site may have limited potential archaeological values. An 1875 map of Timaru (South Canterbury Museum) shows Lot 192 was undeveloped at that time.

### **SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

The façade of the Timaru District Council offices has overall heritage significance to Timaru and Timaru district as a whole. The building has historical and social significance for its association with the Carnegie library system and the evolution of local government in the township and cultural value for its association with the community's civic infrastructure since 1909. The façade of the Timaru District Council offices has architectural significance as the work of successful Timaru architectural practice Walter Panton & Son and technological and craftsmanship significance for its Oamaru stone masonry construction and ornamental classical detailing. The façade of the Timaru District Council offices has contextual significance for the contribution it makes to the Timaru town centre streetscape; its site may have limited potential archaeological significance in view of its post-1900 development.

### **HERITAGE CATEGORY**

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### **REFERENCES**

- *Temuka Leader* 22 May 1924, p. 3.
- *Timaru Herald* 13 August 1908, p. 7; 18 February 1909, p. 7; 31 December 1910, p. 2; 4 July 1911, p. 6; 1 July 1912, p. 4; 15 July 1913, p. 5; 10 March 1914, p. 5; 19 June 1914, p. 8; 2 December 1916, p. 8; 7 September 1918, p. 2; 26 November 1919, p. 2; 22 April 2008, & 24 June 2017 (available online).
- *Press* 6 March 1909, p. 12; 12 October 1926, p. 14; 26 November 1927, p. 7; 19 May 1931, p. 8; 14 February 1933, p. 11; 23 May 1933, p. 5; 16 January 1934, p. 5.
- *NZ Times* 14 September 1900, p. 3.
- *Progress* 1 July 1907, pp. 28, 29.
- *Mataura Ensign* 29 March 1895, p. 3.

- *Southland Times* 25 January 1896, p. 1.
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/2075>
- *Directory of British Architects, 1834-1914: Vol. 2 (L-Z)* available online.
- <http://sites.rootsweb.com/~nzlscant/Panton.htm>
- Susan Liebich 'Connected Readers: Reading Practices and Communities Across the British Empire, c.1890-1930' PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 2012 (available online).



Extent of setting, limited to three land parcels on which the historic façade is located, 2 King George Place, Timaru.



Land parcels making up 2 King George Place, Timaru.

