

TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME former Union Bank of Australia

ADDRESS 119 Stafford Street, Timaru

PHOTOGRAPH



(A McEwan, 11 July 2018)

DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. HHI71 **HNZ LIST No. & CATEGORY** n / a
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Lot 20 DP 1

VALUATION NUMBER 2500048300B

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1876-77

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** Thomas Roberts, architect; Thomas Machin,
contractor

STYLE Victorian commercial classicism

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Two storey-building with irregular rectangular footprint and hipped and gabled roof forms. Suspended veranda across plastered façade, with modern shop fronts on ground floor and six window openings above. Bluestone construction is exposed on the side (south) and rear (east) walls. Double-hung sash and casement windows. Single-storey gabled extension at rear with hip roofed brick outbuilding beyond that.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Timaru bluestone (basalt), cement plaster, brick, slate and corrugated iron.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Façade remodelled and suspended veranda installed; modern shop fronts erected in front of original building facade (pre-1970?).

SETTING

The former bank stands on the east side of Stafford Street, south of its intersection with George Street. Across the road stand the Theatre Royal (heritage item # 46) and the former Criterion Hotel; to the south is the former Gladstone Board of Works building (heritage item # 43). To the north are the former Government Life Building (heritage item # 47) and the

former National Bank (heritage item # 45). The extent of scheduling is the land parcel on which the building is located, in view of the potential archaeological values of the site.

HISTORY

The Union Bank of Australia completed its new premises in Stafford Street in March 1877. The building contract was in the region of £3000 and occupation by the bank was delayed slightly when the contractor was declared insolvent and one of his creditors took possession of the building in lieu of payment. The Union Bank of Australia had issued its first prospectus in London in 1837 and became the first bank to operate in New Zealand, opening a branch in Wellington in 1840. The bank established a branch in Timaru in 1867 and at the turn of the 20th century the bank was run by a manager and six banking officers. Charles Grierson was the manager at the time that the new bank building opened in 1877. The Union Bank merged with the Bank of Australasia in 1951, the new entity being named the ANZ Bank. Archives of all three banks are held by ANZ. The building was thus occupied by the Union Bank of Australia for 74 years. It would appear that the facade was extended and remodelled in the 1950s or 1960s. The Timaru District Council purchased the property in September 2018 to facilitate development in the area.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Union Bank of Australia has historical significance for its association with the early banking history of Timaru and, more generally, the reconstruction of the town centre after the fire of December 1868.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Union Bank of Australia has cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of its former bank managers, their families and customers. Bank managers were typically provided with on-site accommodation in the 19th century; historically the former Union Bank therefore combined commercial and residential functions.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The former Union Bank of Australia has architectural significance as the work of early Timaru architect Thomas Roberts, who was born and trained as an engineer in England. Roberts emigrated to Canterbury in 1870 and was engineer to the Timaru and Gladstone Board of Works in the early 1870s before establishing a private practice as an architect and licensed surveyor. Roberts also designed the Sealy house (1875), which is now known as Shand House at Craighead Diocesan School (heritage item # 9) and called tenders for the Wrecks Monument (heritage item # 49) in September 1882. In 1890 Roberts joined the NZ Midland Railway Company and five years later he was appointed Assistant Engineer in charge of Nelson district for the Public Works Department. By December 1901 he had returned to private practice in Nelson, leaving that city in c.1905. Although the façade of the former Union Bank has been remodelled the building retains a high level of authenticity on its east and south elevations.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The former Union Bank of Australia has high technological and craftsmanship significance for its stone construction. The building represents both a response to the March 1869 council bylaw stipulating masonry construction in the central business district, which was passed after the December 1868 fire that destroyed around 30 buildings in the town centre, and the use of a building material that is closely identified with Timaru's colonial building tradition. The contractor Thomas Machin was later to practise as an architect, which was permissible in the era before registration and the protected status of the term 'architect' was introduced in the early 20th century.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Union Bank of Australia has contextual importance for the contribution it makes to the historic character of Stafford Street and in relation to a number of nearby scheduled heritage buildings. The building's presence in close proximity to the former Gladstone Board of Works building, the former Landing Service building (heritage item # 44), and the former National Bank attests to the historic importance of the southerly section of Stafford Street for the commercial development of the city.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

The site of the former Union Bank of Australia has potential archaeological significance relating to the early development of Timaru and its central business district.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The former Union Bank of Australia has overall heritage significance to Timaru and the district of Timaru. The former bank has historical significance for its association with the rebuilding of Timaru's town centre after the catastrophic fire of December 1868 and the development of Stafford Street. The former Union Bank of Australia has cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of its former managers, their families, staff and clientele and architectural significance as the work of colonial architect Thomas Roberts. The former Union Bank of Australia has high technological significance as a Timaru bluestone building that dates to the reconstruction period following the fire of December 1868 and contextual importance for its contribution to the historic streetscape of Stafford Street. The former Union Bank of Australia has potential archaeological significance relating to its construction and early use.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

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REFERENCES

- *Timaru Herald* 23 December 1874, p. 4; 6 September 1875, p. 3; 20 September 1875, p. 2; 3 July 1876, p. 1; 3 August 1876, p. 3; 24 August 1876, p. 2; 14 February 1877, p. 1; 10 July 1877, p. 3; 13 February 1878, p. 1; 21 February 1893, p. 2.
- *Globe* 16 March 1877, p. 2.
- *Press* 19 March 1877, p. 2; 14 January 1944, p. 6.
- *Temuka Leader* 29 December 1927, p. 3.
- *South Canterbury Times* 16 May 1882, p. 3.
- *Cyclopedia of New Zealand – Canterbury Provincial District* Christchurch, 1903; available online.
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/2306>
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/2138>



Extent of setting, 119 Stafford Street, Timaru.



Side elevation.



Rear elevation.