

TIMARU DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME Timaru Courthouse
ADDRESS 14 North Street, Timaru

PHOTOGRAPH



(A McEwan, 11 July 2018)

FORMER DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. No. 41 **HNZ LIST NO. & CATEGORY** 2050 / 2
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Sec 2 SO 19155

VALUATION NUMBER 2500025600

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1877-78

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** WH Clayton, Colonial Architect; Henry Thornton,
contractor

STYLE Italianate

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Multi-level building with an irregular rectangular footprint and hipped and gabled roof forms. Central courtroom block is perpendicular to the street and has a hip-roofed lantern mounted on the ridge. Three arch-headed openings with keystones on street front beneath principal gable; side openings are glazed. Quoins and blocks beneath window sills. Gable end treated as an open-bed pediment with relief lettering bearing building date and name. Central block flanked by single-storey wings with doors on the north elevation having side- and fanlights. Double-hung sash windows. Connected to modern courthouse buildings at rear (south elevation).

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Concrete, plastered cement, corrugated metal roofing.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Jury room addition (1907). Additions (1910, 1950s & 1983). Removal of 1950s/1983 additions on the street frontage (c.2010/11). Chimneys and roof lantern ventilator removed. Gable end plaque replaced by current lettering. Slate roof replaced with metal.

SETTING

The building stands on the south side of North Street close to its intersection with Barnard Street. It is set back from the road boundary and attached to a large modern court building to the south. A paved plaza runs along the east side of the property and provides pedestrian

access through the block to Heaton Street. The Queen's Head Hotel (1878) stands nearby, at the western corner of North and Barnard Streets. The modern Police Station immediately to the west of the Courthouse maintains the historic relationship between the two institutions. The extent of scheduling is limited to the northern portion of the land parcel on which the building is located, notwithstanding the potential archaeological values of the site as a whole.

HISTORY

A new courthouse was erected in Timaru in 1877-78 to the design of the Colonial Architect WH Clayton. The building replaced an earlier courthouse on the site and was heavily criticised by the judiciary and the local newspaper at the time for the inadequacies of its interior layout. The new courthouse served the Supreme Court, District Court and Resident Magistrate's Court. The grand jury room was extended in 1907 to remedy some of the failings identified in 1878. Plans to build a new courthouse in the mid-1970s did not come to fruition, instead additions made in the 1950s and c.1983 extended the building and partially obscured its street frontage. The High Court sat in the building for the last time in April 2009. The modern redevelopment of the court precinct included the removal of the additions made to the front of the 1877-78 courthouse, as well as earthquake strengthening and refurbishment of its exterior. The building remains in use by the courts department.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Timaru Courthouse has high historical and social significance for its association with the administration of judicial proceedings in Timaru since 1878. Its continued use for court business greatly enhances its historic values; the building demonstrates the 140-year history of jurisprudence in Timaru.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Timaru Courthouse has cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of former court staff, as well as the judges, lawyers, plaintiffs and defendants, who have served in or been brought before the court over the years.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The Timaru Courthouse has high architectural significance as the work of Colonial Architect William Henry Clayton. Clayton (1823-77) was born in Tasmania and emigrated to New Zealand in 1863, having already established his architectural career in Launceston. After six years in private practice in Dunedin, Clayton was appointed Colonial Architect in mid-1869. He was New Zealand's first and only Colonial Architect. Clayton set the pattern for the government architects who came after him by developing standard plans for government buildings, including an Italianate model for courthouses that was realised at Whanganui (1870-71), Reefton (1872) and Timaru. Clayton died before the Timaru building could be completed.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The Timaru Courthouse has high technological significance for its mid-Victorian concrete construction. WH Clayton was a pioneer in his use of concrete for government buildings but his concrete Blenheim Government Buildings (1877) were demolished in the 1960s and the concrete house he built for himself in Wellington (1874) is also no longer extant. The Timaru Courthouse is the only concrete building in New Zealand designed by Clayton that is listed by Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Timaru Courthouse has contextual significance as a local landmark on the periphery of the Timaru town centre and for its historic contribution to Timaru's justice precinct.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the building pre-dates 1900 its site has potential archaeological significance, notwithstanding the significant redevelopment that has occurred on the site. The earlier building (1864) that housed the land office and courthouse was located at the centre of the subject site (1875 town map, South Canterbury Museum).

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

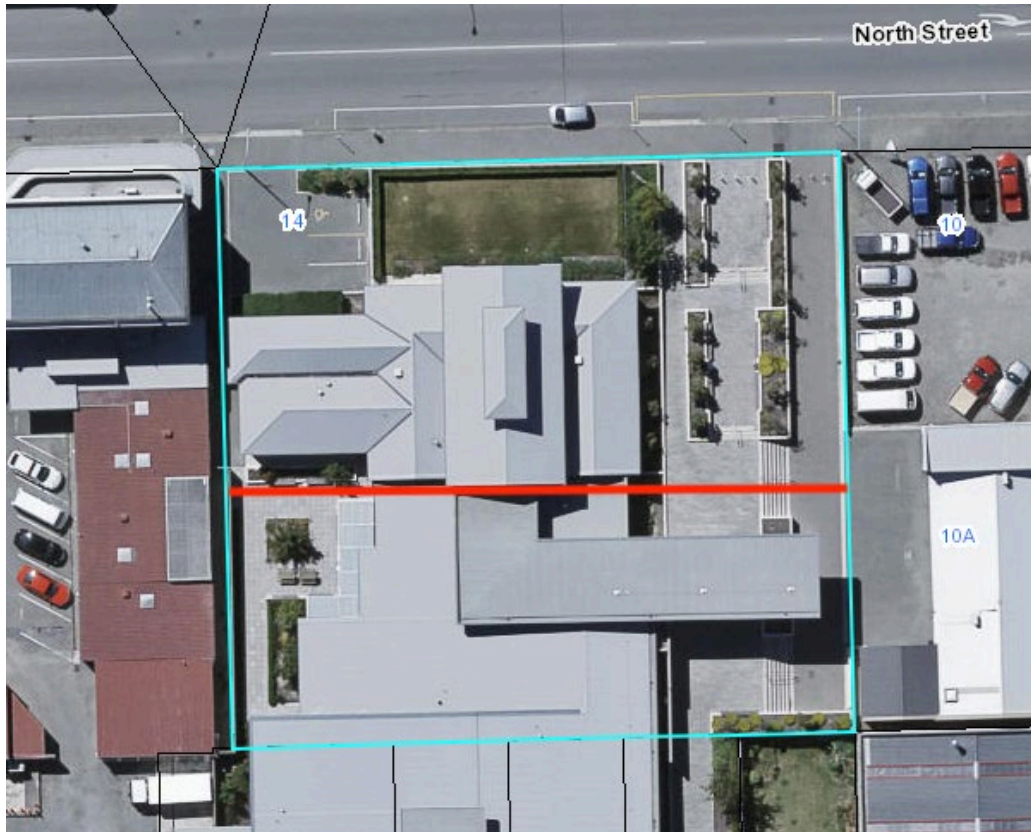
The Timaru Courthouse has high overall heritage significance to Timaru and Timaru district as a whole. The building has high historical significance for its 140-year history of judicial use and cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of those who served or were called to appear in the court. The Timaru Courthouse has high architectural significance as an Italianate design by Colonial Architect WH Clayton and high technological and craftsmanship significance for its concrete construction and classical detailing. The Timaru Courthouse has contextual significance as a local landmark and its site has potential archaeological significance in view of the presence of the judiciary on the property since the 1860s.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

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REFERENCES

- *Timaru Herald* 24 March 1877, p. 1; 4 March 1878, p. 3; 12 June 1878, p. 3; 26 December 1878, p. 2; 18 February 1907, p. 2; 6 August 1910, p. 7; 10 January 1911, p. 5; 23 October 1974 (page number unknown); 18 April 2009 (available online).
- *Press* 13 June 1878, p. 2; 3 July 1897, p. 9.
- *North Otago Times* 4 March 1878, p. 2.
- *Star* 9 November 1907, p. 7.
- *Oamaru Mail* 3 July 1880, p. 2.
- *Bruce Herald* 2 November 1880, p. 3.
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/2050>
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/1685>
- <http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/5184>
- <https://www.opusarch.co.nz/projects/timaru-courthouse/>
- *Cyclopedia of New Zealand – Canterbury Provincial District* Christchurch, 1903 (available online).
- <https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/2c20/clayton-william-henry>
- <http://www.c-lund.co.nz/projects/timaru-courthouse.html>
- P Richardson 'Building the Dominion: Government Architecture in New Zealand, 1840-1922' PhD thesis, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, 1997 (available online).
- G Thornton *Cast in Concrete – Concrete construction in New Zealand, 1850-1939* Auckland, 1996
- *Parliamentary Debates (Hansard)* Vol. 296, 15 November to 6 December 1951, p. 1430; Vol. 419, 13 July to 15 August 1978, p. 2003 (available online).
- Archives New Zealand.



Extent of setting, limited to north of red line, 14 North Street, Timaru.



Courthouse as built. Richardson thesis, unpaginated.