

## Hastings CBD Heritage Inventory Project



---

### HASTINGS MUNICIPAL WOMEN'S REST

---

**OTHER NAMES:** Women's Rest, Heretaunga Women's Centre and Hastings Women's Centre



Photo: R. O'Brien, NZHPT, March 2006

#### **LOCATION:**

*Street and Number:* 201 Russell Street South, corner of Eastbourne Street East<sup>1</sup>

*Location Information:* Civic Square which is located adjacent to the Palmerston North - Gisborne Railway Line and Lyndon Road East. (Please note that the Russell Street Extension is not legal road and is located adjacent to Russell Street South.)

*City/ Town:* Hastings

*Region:* Hawke's Bay

---

<sup>1</sup> Address on early building permit given as '200-202 Russell Street South'; Building Permit 1178, Building Permit Card '200-202 Russell Street South', Hastings District Council.

## LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

*Legal Description:* Sections 75 & 91, Lots 1-7 DDP 672, Lot 174 & 178-182 DDP 83, Lots 1-5 DDP 348, Hawke's Bay Registry

*Certificates of Title (includes Registry):* HB43/101 & HB22/40, Hawke's Bay Registry

## SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE:

### *Architectural Value:*

The Women's Rest is an excellent example of the Californian bungalow style of architecture, widely adopted for domestic buildings in New Zealand in the 1920s, and here used to very good effect for a new building type, a women's rest rooms. It displays many of the characteristic features of the style, both outside and in, and is a competent piece of architecture, well suited to its purpose (with some alterations) even after 85 years of service.

### *Historic Value:*

The Hastings Women's Municipal Rest has historical significance. The building is the first purpose-built women's 'rest rooms' to be constructed in New Zealand.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the 1920s similar rest rooms were established in many other towns across the country and, by the 1930s, they were considered a 'civic necessity'.<sup>3</sup> Designed to accommodate mothers and working women, Cooper *et al* argue that the construction of rest rooms became 'a signifier both of the proper involvement of women in public life and of civic responsibility to women'.<sup>4</sup> The history of the building is recorded on the foundation stone and plaques in the main foyer.

### *Aesthetic Value:*

The Women's Rest has aesthetic value for the style, form and detail of the building, which is appropriate to its purpose and to its park setting. The aesthetic value, while significant in views from Civic Square, is severely diminished where it would be greatest, on the north side where its best elevation is spoiled by a modern bus shelter.

### *Social Value:*

The Hastings Women's Municipal Rest Rooms have social significance. During its first year, there were almost 10,000 visitors to the Women's Rest.<sup>5</sup> The rooms continue to be used for their original purpose and have been widely used by women from out of town, working women and by mothers who were visiting Plunket.<sup>6</sup> The building continues as a facility for women and it offers diverse services to women under the management of the Heretaunga Women's Group.<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> M.B. Boyd, *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings*, Wellington, 1984, p 220.

<sup>3</sup> Annabel Cooper, Robin Law, Jane Malthius, and Pamela Wood, 'Rooms of Their Own: Public Toilets and Gendered Citizens in a New Zealand City, 1860-1940', *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol 7, no 4, 2000, p 427.

<sup>4</sup> Annabel Cooper, Robin Law, Jane Malthius, and Pamela Wood, 'Rooms of Their Own: Public Toilets and Gendered Citizens in a New Zealand City, 1860-1940', *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol 7, no 4, 2000, p 428.

<sup>5</sup> M.B. Boyd, *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings*, Wellington, 1984, p 220.

<sup>6</sup> *Hastings Leader*, 20 November 2003.

<sup>7</sup> Hastings District Council file information.

### *Technical Value:*

The Women's Rest has some technical value for its construction methods and materials of the early 1920s; its value in this respect is enhanced by its surviving the Napier Earthquake of 1931 and by its high level of authenticity. The building has high value for its design, since it is a very good example of the Californian bungalow style of architecture, adapted for a non-domestic use.

### **HISTORY:**

In 1919, the Women's Christian Temperance Union had begun providing rest rooms for women in a building on Heretaunga Street.<sup>8</sup> Men's toilets, required to counteract the 'committal of nuisances in the streets', were provided from the mid-nineteenth century yet no similar provision was made for women. In the early twentieth century, department stores and shops began to provide toilets for women, recognising the commercial value in such facilities. By the 1910s, there was recognition that women's access to public spaces was limited, to some extent, by the lack of toilet facilities.

In Hastings, at the suggestion of the mayor, George Ebbett, a committee was set up with the aim of providing a new municipal building to cater for the needs of women. The Borough Council agreed to the proposal and steps were undertaken to secure an appropriate building site in central Hastings.<sup>9</sup> In 1920 a building permit to construct a 'dwelling & rest' was issued.<sup>10</sup>

The Women's Rest, built in the style of a Californian bungalow, cost approximately £2500 to construct and was paid for largely by private contributions.<sup>11</sup> It was designed by the Borough Engineer, S.B. Dodge. The foundation stone was laid by the mayor on 23 March 1921 and the building was officially opened on 8 September 1921.<sup>12</sup> Administered by a Council-controlled committee, the Women's Rest included accommodation for a live-in matron and also rooms for the Hastings branch of the Plunket Society.<sup>13</sup> Plunket was given free use of the rooms in return for a contribution towards the matron's salary.<sup>14</sup>

The Women's Rest was the first amenity of its kind in New Zealand.<sup>15</sup> In the early 1920s, discussions concerning women's toilets focussed largely on women as mothers, with some consideration also given to the needs of the growing number of working women.<sup>16</sup> Cooper *et al* argue that the building of rest rooms became 'a signifier both of the proper involvement of women in public life and of civic responsibility to women'.<sup>17</sup> They comment that the shift from 'public lavatories' to 'rest rooms' placed 'less emphasis on women as creatures with a need to urinate or worse and more on women as mothers, as creatures with a need to 'rest'.<sup>18</sup> Cooper *et al* also suggest that 'rest rooms' provided an extra

---

<sup>8</sup> M.B. Boyd, *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings*, Wellington, 1984, p 219.

<sup>9</sup> M.B. Boyd, *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings*, Wellington, 1984, p 220.

<sup>10</sup> Building Permit number 1178, issued 5 November 1920 to the Borough Council, on '200-202 Russell Street South' Permit Card, Hastings District Council

<sup>11</sup> *Official Handbook of Hastings for Tourist, Sportsman, and Settler*, Hastings, 1929.

<sup>12</sup> Foundation Stone, Hastings Municipal Women's Rest Building; M.B. Boyd, *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings*, Wellington, 1984, p 220.

<sup>13</sup> M.B. Boyd, *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings*, Wellington, 1984, p 220.

<sup>14</sup> M.B. Boyd, *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings*, Wellington, 1984, p 218.

<sup>15</sup> M.B. Boyd, *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings*, Wellington, 1984, p 220.

<sup>16</sup> Annabel Cooper, Robin Law, Jane Malthus, and Pamela Wood, 'Rooms of Their Own: Public Toilets and Gendered Citizens in a New Zealand City, 1860-1940', *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol 7, no 4, 2000, pp 427-428.

<sup>17</sup> Annabel Cooper, Robin Law, Jane Malthus, and Pamela Wood, 'Rooms of Their Own: Public Toilets and Gendered Citizens in a New Zealand City, 1860-1940', *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol 7, no 4, 2000, p 428.

<sup>18</sup> Annabel Cooper, Robin Law, Jane Malthus, and Pamela Wood, 'Rooms of Their Own: Public Toilets and Gendered Citizens in a New Zealand City, 1860-1940', *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol 7, no 4, 2000, p 428.

space for privacy from men at a time when women's clothing was becoming more revealing.<sup>19</sup> By the 1930s such facilities were considered to be a 'civic necessity'.<sup>20</sup>

In Hastings, the Women's Rest was widely used by women from out of town, working women, and mothers who were visiting Plunket.<sup>21</sup> During its first year, there were almost 10,000 visitors to the Women's Rest.<sup>22</sup> In 1929, a booklet promoting Hastings claimed that around 170 women used the building each day. It detailed that:

*Its purpose is to serve as a retiring place where young businesswomen may spend their lunch hour and of a place of rest to mothers or women visitors to Hastings. Here they might obtain light refreshments, mothers may attend to their children, warm their babies' bottles, leave their parcels, write letters, read journals, and attend to their toilet.*<sup>23</sup>

The booklet stated that, owing to the popularity of the facility, the Council proposed to make extensions that would provide a sun porch, children's nursery and play room, and an outside playground. It is unclear whether these plans were carried out.

In 2003, the Women's Rest continued to be used as a space for women, being occupied by the Heretaunga Women's Group.<sup>24</sup> Under the management of the Heretaunga Women's Group, courses and workshops are run from the building as well as support groups and gatherings, counselling services and other services.

## **DATES:**

1920	Building permit issued; construction of the Women's Rest begins. <sup>25</sup>
1921	Women's Rest opens; almost 10,000 visitors during the first year. <sup>26</sup>
1929	Council proposes extensions. <sup>27</sup>
1931	Minor repairs carried out to make good damage caused by Hawke's Bay earthquake.
1993	Building consent issued to upgrade the Women's Rest. <sup>28</sup>
1997	Building consent issued to alter plumbing and electrical installations. <sup>29</sup>
1997	Building consent issued to erect two pergolas. <sup>30</sup>
2003	Building consent issued to enlarge café kitchen area. <sup>31</sup>
2003	Building consent issued for roof repairs and replacement. <sup>32</sup>

## **PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

*Architect:* S.B. Dodge (Borough Engineer)

*Builder:* Mr Scott (caretaker of municipal buildings)

<sup>19</sup> Annabel Cooper, Robin Law, Jane Malthus, and Pamela Wood, 'Rooms of Their Own: Public Toilets and Gendered Citizens in a New Zealand City, 1860-1940', *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol 7, no 4, 2000, p 429.

<sup>20</sup> Annabel Cooper, Robin Law, Jane Malthus, and Pamela Wood, 'Rooms of Their Own: Public Toilets and Gendered Citizens in a New Zealand City, 1860-1940', *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol 7, no 4, 2000, p 427.

<sup>21</sup> *Hastings Leader*, 20 November 2003.

<sup>22</sup> M.B. Boyd, *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings*, Wellington, 1984, p 220.

<sup>23</sup> *Official Handbook of Hastings for Tourist, Sportsman, and Settler*, Hastings, 1929.

<sup>24</sup> Hastings District Council file information.

<sup>25</sup> *Hastings Leader*, 20 November 2003.

<sup>26</sup> M.B. Boyd, *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings*, Wellington, 1984, p 220.

<sup>27</sup> *Official Handbook of Hastings for Tourist, Sportsman, and Settler*, Hastings, 1929.

<sup>28</sup> Hastings District Council file information.

<sup>29</sup> Hastings District Council file information.

<sup>30</sup> Hastings District Council file information.

<sup>31</sup> Hastings District Council file information.

<sup>32</sup> Hastings District Council file information.

---

*Construction details:* Timber construction, stucco cladding, corrugated iron roof.

*Description:* The Women's Rest is a very good example of the Californian bungalow style, which made its first appearance in New Zealand before the First World War, becoming very popular through the 1920s for domestic buildings. The building, in another context, could easily be mistaken for a large dwelling, so many of its features being common to good quality housing of the early 1920s. These features include low-pitched roofs; deep verandahs; shingles in the gable ends; exposed structure in the form of beams and rafter ends; tapered verandah columns, and casement windows with fanlights above.

The interior joinery is also typical of the period with shaped architraves and plain panelled doors, while linings consist of original sheet plaster panels with plain timber cornices. The heavily textured stuccoed finish of the exterior walls is also typical of the style.

The single-storey building has an attractive garden setting on the corner of Civic Square, the trees and gardens emphasising its domestic qualities. The verandah, wrapping around the north and west sides of the building and with several rooms opening on to it, is an important feature, providing a shaded outdoor space with views out to the garden and nearby buildings. Another feature deserving of mention is the semi-circular bay window on the eastern side, again emphasising the close relationship of building and garden setting.

There have been some alterations over time, including the closing in of a porch on the south-west corner, and the replacement with corrugated iron of the original roof cladding; this was diamond-shaped asbestos slates, commonly used on bungalow-style buildings; these by chance survive on the roof of a bay window.

The townscape value of the building has been lessened by a modern view-blocking bus shelter close to its north side, but the west elevation in particular is still seen through the trees from Eastbourne Street.

#### **ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:**

<b>Element</b>	<b>Significance or Value</b>
Structure, stucco finish	Aesthetic, technical
Window and door joinery	Aesthetic, technical
Verandah	Aesthetic
Bay window	Aesthetic

#### **MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES:**

Boyd, M.T., *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings*, Wellington, 1984.

Cooper, Annabel; Law, Robin; Malthus, Jane; and Wood, Pamela; 'Rooms of Their Own: Public Toilets and Gendered Citizens in a New Zealand City, 1860-1940', *Gender, Place and Culture*, vol. 7, no 4, 2000, pp 417-433.

Hastings District Council file information.

*Hastings Leader*, 20 November 2003.

**Hastings Municipal Women's Rest, 201 Russell Street South, Hastings**

Inventory Number 10; Property ID 21451; TRIM Reference: 21451#002#0009

NZHPT Register Number 1105

P. Cleaver & C. Cochran, April 2006; Final Report August 2012, updated 2015 by HDC Environmental Policy Team

---

*Official Handbook of Hastings for Tourist, Sportsman, and Settler, Hastings, 1929.*

**OTHER INFORMATION:**

*NZHPT Registration Number:* Women's Rest is a Category I Historic Place (Number 1105).

*District Plan Listing:* Listed as a Category I Historic Place in the Operative Hastings District Plan (Heritage Item 23). In the Proposed Hastings District Plan, 2015, the Women's rest is listed as a Category I Heritage Item (HB38).

*New Zealand Historic Places Act 1993:* This site has been identified as a potential archaeological site under Section 2 of the New Zealand Historic Places Act 1993.

**OTHER PHOTOGRAPHS:**



Hastings Rest Rooms soon after completion (S. C. Smith Collection, 48228½, Alexander Turnbull Library)



**Hastings Municipal Women's Rest, 201 Russell Street South, Hastings**

Inventory Number 10; Property ID 21451; TRIM Reference: 21451#002#0009

NZHPT Register Number 1105

P. Cleaver & C. Cochran, April 2006; Final Report August 2012, updated 2015 by HDC Environmental Policy Team

---



Showing the Plunket Entrance to the Women's Rest in the 1920s, prior to the alterations to this area (Reference 5751, Hawke's Bay Art Gallery and Museum)



Showing alterations to the Plunket Entrance (circa 1950, Dave Williams Collection of Photographs, Hawke's Bay Museum and Art Gallery).

**Hastings Municipal Women's Rest, 201 Russell Street South, Hastings**

Inventory Number 10; Property ID 21451; TRIM Reference: 21451#002#0009

NZHPT Register Number 1105

P. Cleaver & C. Cochran, April 2006; Final Report August 2012, updated 2015 by HDC Environmental Policy Team

**Original Plans circa 1932**

