

Former Public Trust Office, 201 Karamu Road North, Hastings.

Inventory Number: 20; Property ID 21273; TRIM Reference 21273#002#0006

NZHPT Registration Number: 1101

Report by Michael Kelly / Chris Cochran draft July 2007; Final Audit 28 October 2009; Updated August 2012, Updated 2015 by the HDC Environmental Policy Team

Hastings CBD Heritage Inventory Project



PUBLIC TRUST OFFICE (FORMER)



Photo: K Pascall, 2012



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Photo: P. Huddleston, 2015

LOCATION:

Street and Number: 201 Karamu Road North

City / Town: Hastings

Region: Hawke's Bay

Location Information: corner of Karamu Road North and Queen Street East

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Legal Description: Lot 1, DP 4893, Hawke's Bay Registry

Certificates of Title (includes Registry): B1/1008, Hawke's Bay Land District

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Architectural Value:

The building is a very good example of the stripped Classical style, which gives it an air of authority and dependability that is appropriate to the use. While typical of its time in many respects, it uses Classical elements in an original way, especially in the giant order columns on either side of the main entrance. It is cleverly arranged with access to the separate tenancy of the first floor at the far end of the building, a thoughtful response to the particular requirements of the time. It is the work of a regionally important architect, Stanley Fearn, and extends our understanding of his work.

Historic Value:

The Public Trust is one of the country's most enduring crown entities, and the country's oldest trustee organisation. Established in 1872, it has played a considerable role in the country's history, through its role in will, estate and trust administration. A great many New Zealanders have had their affairs administered by the Public Trust. The Hastings office was part of a collection of buildings the Public Trust constructed to house its nationwide network of agencies. In one sense the Hastings office was a typical Public Trust office, but it operated for 70 years providing a service to the people of Hastings and further afield, for a considerable period. The building is no longer associated with the Public Trust, but its period of use remains easily the most significant. The building has some local significance for surviving the Hawke's Bay earthquake intact, while modest significance also comes through the building's designer, Stanley Fearn, who was an architect of some status in Wellington.

Technological Value:

The building has technical value because it is a major commercial building from the time before the Hawke's Bay earthquake of 1931. The structure was engineer-designed, and it survived the earthquake with no recorded damage; the existence of construction details, showing reinforcing details and concrete profiles, enhances this value. It is somewhat

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unusual in that the reinforced concrete construction, used for foundations, floors and walls, also extends to the roof

HISTORY:

The Public Trust Building was completed in February 1926, to a design by Wellington architect Stanley W. Fearn. The plans for the building had been finalised in November 1924 and the contract awarded to Hastings builder J.W.C. Munn. It was built at a cost of £10,925.¹

The site occupied by the Public Trust Building – the corner of Karamu Road North and Queen Street East – was once used for horse sales,² while another (unreferenced) source states that it was the site of the residence of one James O'Neil.³ Stock and station agents Williams and Kettle built saleyards and a rostrum on the site around 1900. The land was acquired by the Public Trustee in 1924,⁴ presumably with no buildings on it. The Public Trust Building was one of several significant public building works undertaken in Hastings around this time, including a new high school and hospital and extensions to the post office.⁵

The Public Trust Office was established in 1872 by central government to prevent the misappropriation of trust funds upon a person's death. Initially the first main task was to administer the estates of deceased persons who had named the Public Trustee as executor of their wills. In 1873 the Public Trust was given the power to administer the estates of persons who died intestate (i.e. without having made a will), to act as trustee of settlements, to manage the properties of living persons and, where empowered by the Court, to manage the estates of mentally ill patients. Later the Public Trust acquired certain duties regarding the estates of minors, the aged and infirm, and the discharging of mortgages when the mortgagee was dead, overseas, or could not be found.⁶ It established a network of agencies throughout the country and progressively erected a number of buildings to house its offices, many of which it has now disposed of, although it retains customer centres in some 35 places. A crown entity, it remains New Zealand's oldest trustee organisation.

The *Hawke's Bay Herald* described Hastings' new Public Trust building as an 'imposing modern street reinforced concrete structure' and 'further evidence of the steady growth of the town and surroundings.'⁷ The building was designed to allow the construction of a second storey at a later date.⁸ The building survived the Hawke's Bay earthquake of 1931, something that can probably be attributed to its reinforced concrete construction.

The Public Trust Building was occupied by the Public Trust for many years, during which time there were relatively few changes, and none to the exterior. In 1972, the roof was replaced in long-run iron.⁹ In 1978, the ground floor interior was extensively renovated to

¹ See Hastings District Council information sheet on the building on New Zealand Historic Places Trust file no 12009-372.

² *Swamp to City: History of Hastings*, Hastings: Heretaunga Intermediate School, 1961, p 25.

³ Madelon Van Zijll de Jong, *Historic Overview of Buildings and Houses in Hawke's Bay (former Public Trust Office)*, Hastings Central Library: Hastings, 2002.

⁴ The Public Trust Office n.d., 'Hastings Public Trust Office Building' p.1.

⁵ Matthew Wright, 2001, *Town and Country: The History of Hastings and District*, Hastings District Council, Hastings, p 404.

⁶ 'Public Trust Office', from *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, edited by A. H. McLintock, originally published in 1966. Te Ara - The Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 26-Sep-2006 www.TeAra.govt.nz/1966/P/PublicTrustOffice/en. See also R.O. Armitage, "The Beginnings" in *Newsletter of the Wellington Regional Committee of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust*, Vol.1, No.3 October 1976 p.7

⁷ *Hawke's Bay Herald*, 1 March 1926, cited in The Public Trust Office, 'Hastings Public Trust Office Building'.

⁸ 'Hastings Public Trust Office Building', p.1

⁹ *Ibid.*

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create an open plan style of office. These alterations involved the removal of many of the original fittings and partitions.

In July 1996, the property was transferred from the Public Trustee to Peter Hue Dalrymple and Joanne Dalrymple.¹⁰ The new owners looked to lease the building, but experienced difficulties in securing tenants. By mid-1997 they were considering the option of demolishing the building to create a car park. In response to this threat, the Historic Places Trust commissioned a report that considered alternative development possibilities.¹¹ The threat of demolition was not carried out.

In March 2001, the property was transferred to the present owner, Kenneth Wheadon.¹² The Public Trust Building was then altered to create a restaurant and bar, and a resource consent was issued for this use.¹³ The ground floor is currently occupied by Down the Road Restaurant and Bar.

¹⁰ Certificate of title B1/1008, Land Information New Zealand, Hawke's Bay Registry.

¹¹ S. Peck, 'Development Options for the Former Public Trust Building Hastings', commissioned for the Historic Places Trust, November 1997.

¹² Certificate of title B1/1008, Land Information New Zealand, Hawke's Bay Registry.

¹³ Building consent AB 20010002, Hastings District Council building files.

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Architect: Stanley Fearn

Date of construction: 1926

Construction details: The structural elements of the building are all reinforced concrete – the foundations, ground and first floors, walls and roof.

Description: The former Public Trust building is a two-storied structure, built up to the street boundary on the corner of Karamu Road and Queen Street. Karamu Road is the shorter of the two facades, and is impressive for the two giant order columns that frame the doorway. The columns are set in a recess in the wall, and rise through two floors; they have simple bases, fluted shafts and Ionic capitals. The façade is otherwise quite plain, with flush wall surfaces and a cornice and plain parapet at roof level; there is a patterned dog-tooth moulding supporting the cornice. This treatment continues down the long façade of nine bays to Queen Street, although here, in shallow relief, is a pattern of Doric pilasters between the windows. Spandrel panels between the ground and first floor windows have a frame with a wreath and lions head.

The building is stripped Classical in style, its almost utilitarian character and solid block-like form being relieved by a Classical ordering and subtle decoration. The Public Trust, as well as banks and other financial institutions commonly employed this style through the 1920s and 30s, as appropriate and suitably serious for such business premises.

The original drawing shows most of the ground floor as a general office (now a bar), with a safe, and offices at the front, on the north side and at the eastern end; there is an entrance from Queen Street here and a staircase to the first floor; this floor was fully divided into 'letting offices'. There was also a basement which housed heating plant.

That the building survived the Hawke's Bay earthquake of 1931 is indicative of the desire of the Public Trust to build in a substantial manner in an earthquake-prone country; it had done this from the beginning, and especially in the head office it built in Wellington in 1909. The architect was Stanley Fearn, and the structural engineer S T Silver, who combined to build for the Hastings office a functional building with structural integrity.

ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

Element	Significance
Both street facades	Architectural, aesthetic, townscape
Structure	Technical

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES:

Armitage R.O., "The Beginnings" in *Newsletter of the Wellington Regional Committee of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust*, Vol.1, No.3 October 1976 p.7

Certificate of title B1/1008, Land Information New Zealand, Hawke's Bay Registry

Hastings District Council building files

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Swamp to City: History of Hastings, Hastings: Heretaunga Intermediate School, 1961.

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Wright Matthew, *Town and Country: the history of Hastings and District*, Hastings District Council, Hastings, 2001.

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:

NZHPT Register: Public Trust Office (Former) is a Category II historic place (Register No. 1101).

District Plan Listing: Listed as a Category II historic place in the Operative Hastings District Plan (Plan declared operative 10th June 2003). Under the Proposed Hastings District Plan 2015, the Public Trust Office (former) is listed as a Category II Heritage Item (HB47). This building is also part of the Queen Street Historic Area.

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.

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ARCHIVE PLAN(S):

Proposed Public Trust Office, Hastings, for the Public Trustee The Working Drawing, by Stanly W. Fearn (November 1924) (TRIM Ref: 21273#0031)