

Westerman's, 101 Heretaunga Street East

Inventory Number 27; Property ID 21397; TRIM Reference 21397#002#0006

NZHPT Registration Number: 178

Report by Michael Kelly / Chris Cochran July 2007; Final Check 4 November 2009; Updated August 2012, Updated 2015 by the HDC Environmental Policy Team

Hastings CBD Heritage Inventory Project



WESTERMAN'S



Photo: P. Huddleston, 2015

LOCATION:

Street and Number: 101 Heretaunga Street East (104 Russell Street)

Location Information: Corner of Heretaunga Street East and Russell Street

City / Town: Hastings

Region: Hawke's Bay

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Legal Description: Lot 1 DP 14181,

Certificate of Title (including Registry): G2/1449, Hawke's Bay Registry

Westerman's, 101 Heretaunga Street East

Inventory Number 27; Property ID 21397; TRIM Reference 21397#002#0006

NZHPT Registration Number: 178

Report by Michael Kelly / Chris Cochran July 2007; Final Check 4 November 2009; Updated August 2012, Updated 2015 by the HDC Environmental Policy Team

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Architectural Value:

Westerman's building is a very good example of the Spanish Mission style, perhaps the most significant of the post-earthquake commercial buildings in Hastings. It makes creative use of the style to provide a building of interesting patterns and textures along the very long Russell Street façade, breaking it up into well-scaled parts. It is the main structure in the row of compatible buildings in the Spanish Mission style that stretch along the whole of this Russell Street block. The building has very high townscape for this reason, and high visual interest, especially for the focus of the composition on the corner of the building, where the Spanish ornamentation reaches its climax in the elaboration of a balcony. This corner is at one of the CBD's busiest intersections, so that the building is something of a landmark in the city.

The retail function of the building is seen by some to be the best designed and executed shop-front joinery and glass work to be found anywhere in the country.

Historic Value:

Westerman's has historic significance for its close association with the Westerman family, in particular Ernest Westerman, the founder of the firm that owned the building (and its predecessor) for over 50 years. The building has been a retailing attraction since its construction and although its fortunes have waxed and waned, it has retained its original commercial purpose. The building has always contained a café, a Hastings institution that continues to this day. The building's design was the work of Edmund Anscombe, one of the country's finest architects during the first half of the 20th century. He made his mark principally in Wellington, but he made a considerable contribution to the rebuilding of Napier and Hastings. Westerman's is one of his finest buildings.

Cultural Value:

Westerman's was probably the first major building completed in Hastings in the aftermath of the earthquake and has considerable symbolic importance for that reason. Westerman's was once the premier retailing outlet in Hastings and many people still alive today will remember its heyday. Today the building houses the city's information centre and is still used by a range of outlets, including a café, a feature of the building since it was established. Built on a key corner right in the middle of town and alongside the railway, Westerman's has high public recognition for locals and visitors alike, and it is recognised for its ornate exterior and fine shop frontages.

Technological Value:

Westerman's has technical interest for its reinforced concrete construction, enhanced by the existence of some of the working drawings which document the profiles of the concrete and the reinforcing. There is also technical value in the lead-light work, the timber shop-front joinery and the Wunderlich pressed metal soffit of the verandah. The building was extremely well built, of high quality materials, and it stands as a very good example of trade practice of the early 1930s.

Westerman's, 101 Heretaunga Street East

Inventory Number 27; Property ID 21397; TRIM Reference 21397#002#0006

NZHPT Registration Number: 178

Report by Michael Kelly / Chris Cochran July 2007; Final Check 4 November 2009; Updated August 2012, Updated 2015 by the HDC Environmental Policy Team

HISTORY:

The former Westerman's building, Hastings, has been a much-loved Hastings landmark since its construction in 1932. It was designed by the noted architect Edmund Anscombe for Westerman's, a well-known Hastings retailing family, following the destruction of their premises in the Hawke's Bay Earthquake in 1931.

Ernest Alfred Westerman (1878-1954) was born in Timaru. After leaving primary school he joined a local drapery business. He gained further experience in the retail trade by working for Ballantynes in Christchurch, and overseas in London. On his return from London, he set up in partnership with a Wellington draper.

In 1911 Westerman branched out on his own and acquired the premises and business of J. A. Greenfield's Eclipse drapery in Hastings. He renamed the business Westerman and was soon joined by his brother Victor Leonard (1891-1973).

In 1921 Westerman and Co. expanded their business by building a new store on the corner of Russell and Heretaunga streets. Behind the shop they set up a sample room which was rented to commercial travellers and company representatives who wished to display their wares. This expansion was part of a general trend in Hastings after the war. The central part of Hastings saw a growth in retail shopping - eventually making Hastings the main supply centre of the province.

On 3 February 1931 a massive earthquake struck the Hawke's Bay region. At 7.9 on the Richter scale, the earthquake did huge damage and is considered to be the largest natural disaster to have occurred in New Zealand in the twentieth century. In Hastings large parts of the retail area were destroyed either by the earthquake or in the subsequent fires. Westerman's building was left substantially in ruins.

In 1932 Edmund Anscombe, who was one of a number of architects involved in the reconstruction of Hastings, was commissioned to design a new building for Westerman's in reinforced concrete. The new building incorporated elements of both Spanish Mission and Art Deco styles. The former can be seen in the use of the arches, colonnades and Marseilles tiled roof, and the latter in the geometry and use of applied decoration. Both these styles were popular in Napier and Hastings during this period. Anscombe reused some of the internal joinery salvaged from the previous shop, including most notably the original staircase with wooden balustrades and newel posts, adding to the eclectic character of the building. The new building was held in high regard by the people of Hastings, as reported in the *Hawke's Bay Tribune* in October 1932:

*To say that Westerman and Co's new building is symmetrical in design and beautiful in detail is not to err on the side of exaggeration. It is the fulfilment of the hopes, efforts and anticipation of a lifetime. It provides an added glory to the new city of Hastings...*¹

The new building cost £4,300 and was built by Trevor Brothers. The very fine leadlight shop frontages were designed by T.J. Clark.²

The building and the business remained in the Westerman family until 1975 when Ernest's son Jack retired and sold the concern to Haywrights Ltd and City Realities.³ In

¹ As quoted in Fowler, M 2007 *From Disaster to Recovery: the Hastings CBD 1931-35*, Michael Fowler Publishing Limited, Havelock North p. 98

² 'Westerman & Co.', Hawke's Bay newspaper in file, 15 October 1932.

Westerman's, 101 Heretaunga Street East

Inventory Number 27; Property ID 21397; TRIM Reference 21397#002#0006

NZHPT Registration Number: 178

Report by Michael Kelly / Chris Cochran July 2007; Final Check 4 November 2009; Updated August 2012, Updated 2015 by the HDC Environmental Policy Team

1980 it became a branch of Farmers, and in 1984 it was bought by the DIC and traded as Arthur Barnett. In 1985 the building was purchased by Durney Investments Ltd⁴ but Arthur Barnett stayed on. During its occupancy, in 1991, the first floor interior furnishings, many of which were part of the original 1921 building, were auctioned off. This took place despite the protests of the Historic Places Trust and Hastings District Council.

In 1993 the building was purchased by the current owners – Hatmar Holdings Ltd. The lower ground floor has now been separated into smaller retail spaces, and its occupants include a women's clothing store, café, and the Hastings Visitor centre. The first floor interior was subject to a refurbishment and fit-out in 2004-05, designed by Fat Parrott Architecture. In 2006, Westerman's, along with the Clock Tower, served as the backdrop to the 75th anniversary commemoration of the Hawke's Bay earthquake.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Architect: Edmund Anscombe

Date of construction: 1932

Construction details: In situ reinforced concrete, plastered inside and out; steel and timber-framed verandah.

Description: This two-storey retail building features an interesting combination of Spanish Mission and Art Deco elements. Sited on the corner of Heretaunga and Russell Streets, in the heart of the Hastings CBD, the building has two street elevations, each treated in a similar manner, with extensive glazing at ground floor level and an ornamented façade above.

The Heretaunga Street facade is divided into three parts. The central section, with a raised parapet, has a group of three round-headed windows; below is the main entrance to the store, clearly delineated by an arched form in the fascia of the verandah. This section is flanked on either side by a pair of square headed windows capped with decorative mouldings.

The Russell Street elevation is much larger than that in Heretaunga Street and is broken up in a way that almost suggests three different buildings. Each end of the elevation is a replica of that on Heretaunga Street, and is somewhat plain in contrast to the central section where Spanish Mission imagery is strongest. In this central section a double doorway with a round-headed fanlight is flanked by two rounded headed windows; on either side of this arrangement is a set of three smaller round-headed windows. Between each window is a barley twist half column to the springing line. Above this central section is a simple, geometric parapet.

A splayed corner links the two street elevations, and has a double doorway leading onto a small balcony with wrought iron balustrading. The doorway is framed by barley twist half columns and fluted Corinthian pilasters with elaborate capitals; the round-headed fanlight over the doors is framed by a stepped moulding which is echoed in the parapet decoration above. This somewhat extravagant and highly ornamented corner section has a Spanish baroque flavour, which provides a strong focus to the building.

³ 'But new owners won't change image', *Hawke's Bay Herald Tribune*, 16 May 1975, n.p.

⁴ NZHPT file 12009-061.

Westerman's, 101 Heretaunga Street East

Inventory Number 27; Property ID 21397; TRIM Reference 21397#002#0006

NZHPT Registration Number: 178

Report by Michael Kelly / Chris Cochran July 2007; Final Check 4 November 2009; Updated August 2012, Updated 2015 by the HDC Environmental Policy Team

A verandah runs the length of the two street facades and is notable for its Wunderlich pressed metal soffit. This is complemented by the extensive use of decorative leadlights in the glazing below, framed in timber, a very rare example of this type of shop-front joinery. Large plate glass windows provide generous light and viewing to display areas inside; the glazing is set outside the line of the columns, a very modern feature for the time.

Built shortly after the 1931 earthquake, the building reused some elements from Westerman's earlier building. The party wall on the south-east boundary was retained, as were parts of the original staircase with timber balustrade and newel posts, and old verandah tiles were reused on the top of parapets; all these elements were little damaged by the quake and were utilised in the new building, adding to its eclectic character.

As of March 2008, though the interior of the ground floor has been refitted over time to meet tenants' requirements significant elements of the building can still be viewed when visiting shops including the leadlights and floor coverings in the entranceways to shops. As noted in the history the fittings on the first floor were auctioned off. The leadlight windows now found on the interior of the upper floor have been repositioned there by the present owners.

ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

Element	Significance
Both street facades, above and below the verandah, and including the verandah	Architectural, aesthetic, technical
Structure	Technical
Staircase	Aesthetic

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES:

Bowron, Greg, 'Anscombe, Edmund 1874-1948', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 16 December 2003 URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/>

'But new owners won't change image', *Hawke's Bay Herald Tribune*, 16 May 1975, n.p.

Solloway, G.F. (ed.), *The New Zealand Business Who's Who*, Wellington: L.T. Watkins Ltd, 1964

Stewart, Di and Associates, *Hastings Central Business District Heritage Study, Volume II – Heritage Register*, 1997

'Westerman & Co.', a Hawke's Bay newspaper in file, 15 October 1932.

Wises Street Directories, 1916 to 1959-60.

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

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:

Westerman's, 101 Heretaunga Street East

Inventory Number 27; Property ID 21397; TRIM Reference 21397#002#0006

NZHPT Registration Number: 178

Report by Michael Kelly / Chris Cochran July 2007; Final Check 4 November 2009; Updated August 2012, Updated 2015 by the HDC Environmental Policy Team

NZHPT Register: Category I – Register No. 178 and included in the Hastings Historic Area.

District Plan: Operative Hastings District Plan (Plan declared operative 10th June 2003), Reference No. H4, Planning Map No. 55. The Westerman's Building is also included in the Hastings Historic Area and the Central Character Precinct.

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.



Russel Street Elevation
Photos: P. Huddleston, 2015

ARCHIVE PLAN(S):

New Premises Cnr Heretaunga and Russell Streets for Messrs Westerman & Co., by Edmund Anson (1932) (TRIM Ref: 21397#065)



