

Commercial Bank of Australia Building, 100 Queen Street East, Hastings

Inventory Number: 5; Property ID 21258; TRIM Reference: 21258#002#0005

NZHPT Register Number 1072

Report by Chris Cochran and Michael Kelly, November 2005; Final Report: November 2012, updated 2015, Environmental Policy Team.

Hastings CBD Heritage Inventory Project



COMMERCIAL BANK OF AUSTRALIA BUILDING

OTHER NAMES: Cameron McDonald Limited Building, Williams & Kettle Building and Wrightson Limited Building



Photo: P. Huddleston, 2015

LOCATION:

Street and Number: 100 Queen Street East

Location: Corner of Queen Street East and Russell Street North

City/ Town: Hastings

Region: Hawke's Bay

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Legal Description: Lot 1 DP 6079

Certificate of Title (Includes Registry): HB73/34, Hawke's Bay Registry

SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Architectural Value:

The building is a good example of the stripped Classical style of the 1930s, a logical and economical answer to the post-earthquake requirements of the bank. It stands four-square on a prominent city corner, still proclaiming its original purpose as a bank both because of its location and its austere architecture.

Aesthetic Value:

The townscape importance of the building is very high, adjoining one of the road crossings of the railway line, and forming part of two groups of buildings of similar scale and architectural quality in Russell Street and Queen Street East. Although it has seen interior changes, the exterior form and detail of the building has a high level of authenticity, with minor exterior changes over its 70-year life.

Historic Value:

The former CBA building was continuously used as banking premises for 47 years. The CBA was one of a number of banks established in Hastings in the 20th century and, as a successful Australasian bank, it made a considerable contribution to the prosperity of the district. This is the building most closely associated with its tenure, which ended with its merger with the Bank of New South Wales in 1982. Since 1984 the building has been owned by the long-standing and influential stock and station agency Williams and Kettle and has had a variety of occupants.

Technological Value:

The building has modest technological value as a reinforced concrete structure of the early 1930s; the design of the staircase in terrazzo enhances this value.

HISTORY:

This building was erected in 1932 as premises for the Commercial Bank of Australia (CBA) in the aftermath of the Hawke's Bay earthquake.

The CBA was founded in Melbourne in 1866 with a nominal capital of £500,000. The prospectus stated that it was intended to provide credit for small traders, farmers, and so forth.¹ After a period of slow growth in Melbourne and its suburbs, greater expansion followed the acquisition of the Australian and European Bank in 1879. Paid-up capital reached £1,000,000 in 1887. The CBA was one of fifteen banks forced to close for a time in April 1893 when an economic depression precipitated a massive rush on funds. A period of reconstruction and redevelopment ensued, lasting until 1920. In 1918, the CBA bought the National Bank of Tasmania and a further period of expansion followed.

¹ Bank Officers' Guild 1935, *Banking in New Zealand*, Moore and Burton, Wellington p.108

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The CBA commenced operations in New Zealand in 1912, in premises in Featherston Street, Wellington², and growth was swift. Progress in the bank's operations in New Zealand may be gauged by five yearly deposit figures of £46,000 in 1913, £449,000 in 1918, £1,000,000 in 1923, £1,630,000 in 1928, and £1,660,000 by 1933.³

The first branch of the CBA opened in Hastings in 1925, in a building on Heretaunga Street West, with just two staff.⁴ This building was destroyed in the Hawke's Bay earthquake in 1931 and operations had to move to a temporary corrugated iron clad building in the backyard of the Bank of New South Wales. This temporary building, known as the Community Banks Building⁵, was used by all the other banks then operating in the town (with the exception of the Bank of New South Wales), all of whom had lost their buildings in the earthquake.

In 1933 a new building was completed on the corner of Queen and Russell Streets for the use of the CBA. Designed by the local architectural firm of Davies, Garnett & Phillips, the building occupied land acquired by Frank Candy, a company manager of Hastings, who sold the property almost immediately (and presumably while construction was still taking place), to Bank Chambers Limited in December 1932.⁶ The company was based in Hastings and, as the building was a purpose-built bank, it would appear to have had a direct association with the CBA. During the company's tenure the building underwent unspecified alterations, in 1939. The bank leased the premises until 1959, when it bought the property.⁷ It remained the Hastings branch of the CBA until 1981, when the property was sold to Queen's Chambers Limited. The CBA then moved to a new building, merging the following year with the Bank of New South Wales to form Westpac.

In 1984 the building was bought by Williams and Kettle Limited, the long-standing Hawke's Bay stock and station agents established by Fred Williams in 1880. The building was presumably acquired as an investment property. In 1985 major changes were made to the interior ground floor layout, with the removal of existing partitions (some original) and the building of new; the staircase and strong room on the Queen Street East side of the building however, remained untouched. This work was designed by Hastings architects Hoogerbrug, Magdalinos and Williams, and the drawings are dated December 1984. At that stage it was known as the 'real estate building'.⁸ The building has since been on-sold. The current owners are Ard Lussa Farms Trust, C.A. Campbell and A.R. Wares.

The building has had a variety of occupants in recent years, the most recent being a personnel agency. In 2002 the façade was repainted in accordance with the Hastings District Council's façade enhancement scheme, with the assistance of a grant of \$3200 from the Landmarks Project. The building is currently occupied by MTF Vehicle Finance.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Architect: Davies, Garnett & Phillips

² Dawe C.E. and C.S. 1986, *Banking, Inside and Out*, Westpac Banking Corporation, Wellington p.91

³ Summary of figures, Moore and Burton p.109

⁴ "Commercial Bank of Australia Branch History – Hastings Branch", Westpac Archives, n.d.

⁵ Dawe C. 1984, *Westpac Banking Corporation in Hastings 1884-1984*, Westpac Banking Corporation, Wellington p.15

⁶ CT HB 73/74, LINZ, Napier

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ See plans for interior changes, prepared by Hoogerbrug, Magdalinos and Williams, Nov. 1984 (approved 9/1/1985), Hastings District Council

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Date of construction: 1933

Construction details: In-situ reinforced concrete; timber-framed roof; steel-framed windows.

Description: The former CBA Bank is a two-storey, reinforced concrete building, standing prominently on the north side corner of Russell Street and Queen Street East. All major structural elements of the building – foundations, exterior and some interior walls, and the ground and first floors – are in-situ concrete, while some interior partitions and the roof framing are in timber. The building is stripped Classical in style, devoid of decoration but for fluted panels between the ground and first floor windows; these are recessed from the grid of columns, which rise through both storeys. The columns stand on a solid plinth, and support a plain parapet. These elements define the simple but bold geometric form of the building.

There are three bays to each elevation, of varying widths and with large windows, with a central bay on the corner; this has the main entrance at ground level and a window with curved frame and glass above. There is another entrance at the end of the Queen Street East façade, with terrazzo finishes to the porch; inside this entrance there is a terrazzo staircase with the original wrought iron balustrade giving access to the first floor. The original ground floor plan shows three entrances (one on Russell Street, the main one on the corner, and the third on Queen Street East, making full use of the corner site); a public space, offices and a strong room, while the first floor had a surgery, waiting room and offices.

The building occupies a prominent corner site, and anchors the ends of two rows of buildings, one forming the east side of Russell Street and the other the north side of Queen Street East.

ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

Element	Significance
Reinforced concrete structure	Technical value
Exterior elevations	Architectural and townscape value
Staircase	Aesthetic and technical value

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES:

Bank Officers' Guild 1935, *Banking in New Zealand*, Moore and Burton, Wellington

"Commercial Bank of Australia Branch History – Hastings Branch", Westpac Archives, no date.

Dawe C.E. and C.S. 1986, *Banking, Inside and Out*, Westpac Banking Corporation, Wellington

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OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:

NZHPT Registration Number: Cameron McDonald Limited Building is listed as a Category II historic place (Register No 1072)

District Plan Listing: Listed as a Category II historic building in the Operative Hastings District Plan (H49) and located with the Central Character Precinct (Plan declared operative 10 June 2003). In the Proposed Hastings District Plan, 2015 the building is listed as a Category II heritage item (HB51) and is located within the Queen Street 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.

OTHER PHOTOGRAPHS:



Commercial Bank of Australia Building (left) circa 1932 (Hastings, Banks, Commercial Bank of Australia Ltd, Henry Norford Whitehead, G-49408-1/2, Alexander Turnbull Library)

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Commercial Bank of Australia Building (left) *circa* 1932 (Hastings, Streets, Queen, ca 1932, Henry Norford Whitehead, G-49405-1/2, Alexander Turnbull Library)

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ARCHIVE PLAN(S):

Bank & Office Building, Cnr of Queen & Russell Streets, Hastings for F.S. Candy Esq. by Davies, Garnett & Phillips (TRIM Ref: 21258#0010)



