

Dominion Buildings, 110 Queen Street East, Hastings

Inventory Number 6; Property ID 21255; TRIM Reference: 21255#002#0005

NZHPT Register Number 1080

Chris Cochran & Michael Kelly with NZHPT, April 2006; Final Audit November 2012, Updated 2015 Environmental Policy Team

Hastings CBD Heritage Inventory Project



DOMINION BUILDINGS

OTHER NAMES: Aotea Chambers



Photo: K Pascall, August 2012

LOCATION:

Street and Number: 110, 114, and 120 Queen Street East

Location Information: This building is located on three titles, each with its own address. 120 Queen Street East retains an access through to Avenue Road East.

City/ Town: Hastings

Region: Hawke's Bay

LEGAL DESCRIPTION:

Legal Description: Lot 1, Deposited Plan 2842, Hawke's Bay Registry; Lot 2, Deeds Plan 315, Hawke's Bay Registry; Lot 1 Deposited Plan 6970, Hawke's Bay Registry

Certificates of Title: HBC2/215, HBM2/714 and HBE1/1077

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SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Architectural Value:

The Dominion Building is a good example of the Edwardian baroque style, a building style that was popular in the years before the First World War. The structure has a strongly modelled façade to Queen Street East, with much interest especially in the decorative features of the pilasters and cornices. Varying bay widths, textures such as in the rustication of the ground floor pilasters, and different patterns of fenestration between the floors add to the visual interest of the building.

It is a rare building in the Hastings context, of a commercial building from the first decade of the twentieth century, and of Classical design, since others of like kind were destroyed by the Hawke's Bay earthquake. It provides an interesting counterpoint in Hastings to the predominant building style of the 1930s.

Aesthetic Value:

The Dominion Building has aesthetic value for its strongly articulated façade, which provides a richly textured edge to the north side of Queen Street. It contributes towards the townscape, forming the centrepiece (both by virtue of its architecture and its scale) to an important collection of period buildings in this block.

Historic Value:

This is a building of considerable historic significance for Hastings, being one of the older commercial buildings in the central city, and one that survived the Hawke's Bay earthquake intact. For this reason, this building offers a rare if isolated view of pre-earthquake Hastings amidst the predominant architectural forms of the 1930s. It is one of the earliest (and reputedly the first) ferro-concrete buildings constructed in the city.

Technological Value:

The building is technically interesting for having survived the Hawke's Bay earthquake, reputedly being one of the first ferro-concrete buildings in Hastings and being a relatively rare example of a major commercial building of the early years of the 20th century. It is a handsome piece of Classical design, important in its own right and as part of a collection of period buildings in this block of Queen Street East. As a building surviving from before the earthquake, it is a link with the early development of the city and a reminder of its prosperity at this time.

HISTORY:

The Dominion Buildings were, reputedly, the 'first ferro-concrete office block' in Hastings.¹ They were completed in 1908: on 21 July of that year the *Hastings Standard* noted that the scaffolding had been taken down from the building to reveal its 'handsome frontage'.

¹ Boyd M. 1984, *City of the Plains: A History of Hastings*, Victoria University Press for Hastings District Council p.133; the same source indicates that they were constructed by 'an American firm'.

The paper went on to comment that the buildings were, 'a distinctive acquisition to Queen Street, and to the town to, for that matter'.²

The buildings were commissioned by Mrs Andrew Hamilton Russell. Mrs Russell was born Gertrude Mary Beetham Williams and was the daughter of prominent couple Mary Margaret Beetham (1845-1903) and runholder and entrepreneur James Nelson Williams (1837-1915).³ In 1896 Gertrude Beetham married Andrew Hamilton Russell (1868-1960).⁴ Russell was a sheep farmer when the couple married. Mrs Russell commemorated her husband on the Dominion Buildings by incorporating the insignia 'AHR' on the façade. Russell went on to form and command the Hawke's Bay Mounted Rifle Volunteers. He received his first promotion, to Major, shortly afterwards and rose rapidly through the ranks thereafter. He is particularly remembered for his distinguished service during the First World War.

The Dominion Buildings were constructed over three separate land parcels. Although it has one continuous façade, for much of its history, the Dominion Buildings were treated as three separate premises. In 1913 Mrs Russell sold the southern portion, which retained the address '110 Queen Street East', to a retired Hastings farmer Letham Wallace Mackersey.⁵ Lindsay Mackersey, a solicitor, established an office in the Dominion Buildings shortly after its completion. After Letham Mackersey's death in 1936 the property passed to his executor, John Fraser, an accountant, who also had offices in the building for many years. The building passed from Fraser to his wife, Nellie, upon his death in 1942. That same year Nellie Fraser sold the property to Ian Mackie, a Waipukurau solicitor, and Fred Carlin, a Hastings accountant. In 1955 it was bought by Aotea Chambers Limited of Hastings.⁶ At this time this portion of the building was renamed 'Aotea Chambers'. Members of the Mackersey family were closely involved in this firm, and retained offices in the building for many decades.⁷ The company finally sold the property to Peter Fenwicke's company Fenwicke and Co. Ltd. in 2001.⁸

The central portion of the building, or '114 Queen Street East', was also sold by Mrs Russell and passed through a number of hands. In the 1920s it was owned by the Cowan family, who operated a plumbing business from the premises.⁹ It was sold in 1965 and was used as office premises. It was purchased by its current owners, W & H Hanger Partnership in 1988.

The northern portion of the building, or '120 Queen Street East', retained the name 'Dominion Buildings' and was owned by Russell family members until the 1970s. Prior to the sale it was used as offices by a variety of business, including accountants Butler & Spence and the Hawke's Bay Mutual Buildings and Investment Society. It also served as the headquarters for the Hawke's Bay Girl Guides Association and the Hastings Townswomen's Guild. It was sold to its current owners in 1988.¹⁰

² *Hastings Standard*, 21 July 1908, p.2

³ For further information see: Boyd, M., 'Williams, James Nelson', 1837-1915', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 7 July 2005, URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz> and Yerex, D., *They Came to Wydrop; The Beetham and Williams families; Brancepeth and Te Parae, Wairarapa 1856-1990*, Wellington, 1991. (Note that the building may have been named in honour of New Zealand acquiring Dominion status in 1907.)

⁴ For further information see Pugsley, C., 'Russell, Andrew Hamilton 1868-1960', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, updated 7 July 2005, URL: <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz>

⁵ HB20/178

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Wises Street Directories*, 1916-1960

⁸ CT HBC2/215, LINZ, Napier

⁹ HB63/228; *Wises Post Office Directories*.

¹⁰ HBE1/1077

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As one of Hastings's early ferro-concrete structures, the Dominion Buildings survived the Hawke's Bay earthquake of 1931 and remain in use as offices to this day.

The Dominion Buildings are currently occupied by The Artisan, Citizens Advice Bureau, Cape Physio, and Knowledge Accountants.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

Architect and Builder: Unknown

Construction completed: 1908

Construction details: Reinforced concrete construction.

Description: The Dominion Building is a handsome Classical structure, two storeys high and dominating the centre of the block of Queen Street east of the railway line because of its height and its great length. The façade is divided into some 13 bays, ten of them with large windows and three of them narrow ones with a door at ground level and a single window on the first floor. The southernmost narrow bay, at first floor level, is embellished with a shield in a semi-circular headed niche.

The bays are divided by pilasters, at ground floor heavily rusticated (emphatically marked out as large blocks of masonry), and at first floor smoothly finished with semi-circular capital and bases. There is a strong horizontal band at first floor level and cornice at roof level, these elements stepping out at each of the pilasters, emphasizing the bays. The parapet above the cornice is plain but for the name and date, the plainness contrasting with the richness of the architectural features below.

All doors and windows are distinguished by rounded top corners to the openings; windows are fixed and double-hung, with some of them (on both floors) altered over time.

ELEMENTS OF ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

Element	Significance or Value
Construction materials	Technological value
Facade	Aesthetic value
Insignia	Commemorative value

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES:

Hastings Standard, 21 July 1908, p.2

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

Hallett, Peter, and Shaw, Peter, *Spanish Mission Hastings: Styles of Five Decades*, Napier, 1991.

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OTHER INFORMATION:

NZHPT Registration Number: Dominion Buildings is listed as a Category II historic place (Register No. 1080)

District Plan Listing: Listed as a Category II historic building (H50) and is located within the Central Character Precinct of the Operative Hastings District Plan (declared operative 10 June 2003). In the Proposed Hastings District Plan, 2015 the building is listed as a Category II heritage item (HB52) and is located within the Queen Street East 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."

OTHER PHOTOGRAPHS:



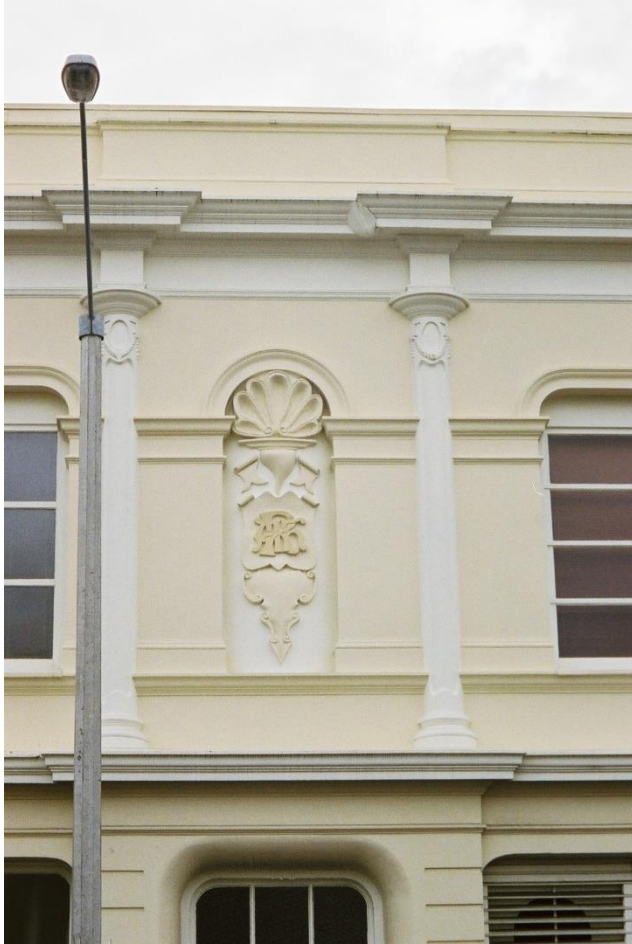
The Dominion Building in 1932 (centre right) ('Hastings-Streets-Queen', H. N. Whitehead Collection, G-49405½)

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Showing detail of 'AHR' emblem
(R. O'Brien, NZHPT, 24 March 2006)



Details of upper level of
façade (R. O'Brien,
NZHPT, 24 March 2006)

ARCHIVE PLAN(S):

Hastings District Council does not hold the original plan for this building.