

Bank of New South Wales (former)



Location: 39/41 Victoria Avenue, Whanganui
Heritage NZ Pouhere Taonga List Number: 968

Physical Description: The two storied, rendered, rectangular planned building, has a symmetrical street elevation with rusticated ground floor and classically designed plastered upper first floor. Ground floor windows are round headed while the first floor are rectangular but with wide architraves, wide shoulders, scrolled bases and keystones. Under each of the first floor windows is a panelled base with a swag. The centre of the street elevation has a shallow projecting pavilion with the central entry flanked by windows either side on the ground floor and with a colonnade of single and double Ionic columns on the first floor. Between the columns are three windows matching the openings below. The building has a plain parapet with ornate cornice forming the entablature of the building and a smaller cornice at the junction of the ground and first floors rising slightly in the centre to meet a cartouche keystone. The name "Bank of New South Wales" is embossed on the parapet.

Although the upper pediment, parapets and chimneys were removed in 1934, the rest of the Avenue façade is totally original. The name "Bank of New South

Register Item Number:

52

Building Type:

- Residential
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Recreation
- Institutional
- Agriculture
- Other

Significance:

- Archaeological
- Architectural
- Historic
- Scientific
- Technological
- Cultural

Thematic Context

- Early Settlement
- Residential
- Industry
- Agricultural
- Commerce
- Transport
- Civic/Admin
- Health
- Education
- Religion
- Recreation
- Community
- Memorials
- Military

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Wales” remains on the parapet. The iron railings on either side were removed in 1992, although the gates are still in place on one side. While the windows all appear to be original the entrance has been altered (probably in the 1970s modernisation) with a new inner doorway and replacement glass above the outer front door.

Internally, the banking chamber retains its pressed steel ceiling and columns with plaster decorations. The 1970s partitions and staircase work had detracted from the general style of the banking chamber and its adjacent offices, but these were largely removed in the 2006/07 alterations. At the same time, a new side entrance giving access to the first floor was created with the alteration of the 1970s staircase position.

Other known names:

Current Use: Offices

Former Uses: Bank

Heritage Status: Heritage NZPT List **District Plan Class:** Class B
(Cat. 2)

Architectural Style: Neo-Palazzo **Date of Construction:** 1910

Materials: Painted cement render, timber joinery

Registered owner:

Legal Description: Section 51, Town of Wanganui, Lot 1 DP 61607 (CT WN30C/891), Wellington Land District

History: The Bank of New South Wales began operating in New Zealand in 1861. On 3 September of that year, the Wanganui branch opened in premises in Ridgway Street, approximately where Ridgway Park is today, which were previously the offices of the Oriental Bank Corporation. The first Wanganui branch manager was John Dow Busby, son of the British Resident Commissioner, James Busby. Other branches of the bank opened in 1861 in Auckland, Wellington, Dunedin and Invercargill.

The Bank of New South Wales purchased the section on Victoria Avenue in January 1865 and established a wooden bank building.¹ The section had previously been owned first by Dr I.C. Featherstone and then by Mr C.C. des Voeux. Further research is needed to ascertain the architect and builder of this wooden bank building, which is shown in many photographs of Victoria Avenue

¹ This wooden building features in many photographs of Victoria Ave from the 1870s onwards.

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taken from the 1870s onwards. In 1886, Christchurch architects, Collins & Harman, designed a new residence for the Bank manager. (This may have been the addition of the first floor to the existing building.) The bank building was repaired in 1892 by Messrs Tawse & Co, Wanganui builders; Bank Board minutes noted that no architect was used for this work.

From 1865 onwards, the Bank of New South Wales became one of the leading banks in Wanganui. Early customers included David Stark Durie; John Ballance; Turakina farmers Robert Glasgow and Alexander Grant as well as other prominent settlers. As was the custom at the time, the bank manager and/or senior staff lived on the premises. A new manager, Mr R.C. Tennent took over in 1886, which coincided with work done on the bank building to provide a residence for the manager and his family.

The old wooden building was demolished to make way for a more permanent bank building in 1910. The building permit for the new brick bank building was issued by the Borough Council on 14 Dec 1909. The estimated cost of construction was £2,849. At the same time, the Bank of Australasia was constructing even more expensive new premises further up the Avenue [subsequently demolished].

The Bank of New South Wales' building was completed first, opening on 31 October 1910. The *Wanganui Herald* on 3 November described the new bank in detail, noting that externally it "conveys a sense of solidarity and stability and has just the appearance that a wholly reliable and trustworthy bank should have." The newspaper considered that the frontage had "a most pleasing appearance, tending somewhat towards a Grecian effect, obtained by means of a combination of pillars, high corners and depressed sides, the whole being of brick and stucco." Iron railings ran each side of the building, with gates to the rear, the one to the left providing access to the entrance to the upper part of the building which served as accommodation for bank staff having three bedrooms and a small sitting room.

The ground floor provided the banking chamber, offices for the manager and accountant on the left, a reinforced concrete strongroom and space to accommodate up to 15 clerks. The newspaper commented that "the ceiling is most striking. It is composed of the increasingly-popular Wunderlich

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compressed steel and is really most effective.” The ceiling was divided into 18 squares of “elaborate design and dainty colouring” all supported by two pillars of reinforced concrete decorated with plaster ornamentation.

The new bank was considered to be “a distinctly creditable addition to the town”. All the contractors are named: the architects Crichton and McKay of Wellington, the builders Russell & Bignell, R&E Tingey the painters and decorators and Pursers who provided the furnishings. Mr L C Morgan was clerk of works.

The Bank of New South Wales celebrated its centenary of operations in Wanganui with a ceremonial plaque being unveiled in the new War Memorial Hall on 4 September 1961.

Until 1968, the bank manager and his family lived in the upstairs flat with the use of a private garden at the rear complete with fruit trees.

On 1st October 1982 the Bank of New South Wales merged with the Commercial Bank of Australia to become the Westpac Banking Corporation. Westpac remained in the old Bank of NSW building until 1987 when they moved to temporary premises across the road in the Hallenstein’s Building. Although the bank did consider “redeveloping” the 39 Victoria Avenue site, they decided to build new premises further up Victoria Avenue in 1989.

The building remained vacant until 1992 when Mainstreet moved in. The rear staff facilities were demolished at this time. Mainstreet later moved to new premises in Ridgway Street in 2006.

In 2006/7 the building was renovated to accommodate professional offices on both the ground and first floors. This work involved creating a new entrance on the east side with stairs to the first floor as well as a new rear entrance, built out of the space where a previous door had been blocked up. Internal alterations were also made at the time and the building was repainted in a new colour scheme. By 2007, the building was occupied by ABN AMRO Craigs on the ground floor, with accountants Lyndsay Tait and Associates and Sandy Dobbin occupying the first floor.

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Architect/Designer: Crichton & McKay, Wellington; 1927 addition - Leopold Atkinson; 2007 alterations: Dickson Lonergan

History of changes:

- 1927: A major addition at the rear, providing extra accommodation for the bank manager and family (including a maid's room). Architect: Leopold Atkinson; builder DW Gilbertson. The building permit issued in Sept estimated the cost to be £2,182. This addition included a closed-in balcony at the rear and a new, separate entrance and stairway to the right of the building. (Note that previously the bank had two stories extending to one-storey one at the rear.)
- 1934: The upper pediment, parapets and chimneys were removed, as they were deemed to be an earthquake hazard following the Napier earthquake.
- 1936: Concrete garage erected at the rear, reflecting the need to provide accommodation for the manager's car at this time.
- 1951: A cycle shed and tank stand built at the rear.
- 1959: Alterations at the rear to provide additional staff facilities. C Newton Hood & CFH Cawsey, architects.
- 1971-1973: Mainly internal alterations undertaken (Earles Lamont Bycroft & Assocs) which resulted in a number of inappropriate partitions, stairway, etc. Fireplaces, some doors and windows were also removed at this time. The garage was demolished in 1972 as part of this work, to create a rear car park.
- 1992: Iron railings on either side removed, rear staff facilities demolished.
- 2006/7: Internal partitions removed, new side entrance added to first floor.

Date Period: 1910s

Rarity / Special Features:

The building retains all its original external features, apart from the upper pediment and parapet, as well as its internal ceilings and columns. The Wunderlich pressed steel ceilings, in particular, are delightful features, reflecting the fashion for these decorative items at the time.

Integrity: Substantially intact although

upper parapet, etc removed in 1930s.

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Representativeness: This original late Edwardian building makes an important contribution to the Avenue streetscape. Its detached position on its section gives it an added air of importance which few other buildings in town have.

The Classical design of the bank is typical of the period where Classicism engendered a sense of solidity and trust and was a commonly used style for such buildings from the mid Victorian period.

Diversity (Form and Features): The original planning is typical of such building types with large and impressively designed banking chambers. Living accommodation was also commonly provided on the upper floors of banks and post offices.

Summary of Significance:

Archaeological Qualities

As the preceding bank was constructed on this site in 1865, it is deemed to be an archaeological site.

Architectural Qualities

The building is designed in a style that refers to the successful businesses of Italy during the Renaissance, particularly in Florence. The use of the style was made popular in England in the 1840s by Charles Barry who designed clubs and commercial buildings. The High Victorian period saw additional classical styles such as the French renaissance become a significant style, however the popularity of the Italianate Palazzo style for commercial buildings was maintained until the Edwardian period, when the style evolved into the Inter-war

Context/Group Value: For more than 120 years this site housed the Bank of New South Wales, one of the four main banks in New Zealand but one which no longer exists by that name. The building recalls a period of growth in Wanganui when banking business, as well as all other trade, was increasing rapidly.

Fragility / Vulnerability: As a masonry building it is potentially at risk from earthquake damage.

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Commercial Palazzo style. This was developed by American architects McKim, Mead and White initially for Chicago high rise commercial buildings, and this style became popular throughout the 'New World'.

The internal planning is typical for the building type.

Designer or Builder – *The building's architect, designer, engineer or builder was a notable practitioner or made a significant contribution to the region or nation.*

The building retains all its original external features, apart from the upper pediment and parapet, as well as its internal ceilings and columns. The Wunderlich pressed steel ceilings, in particular, are delightful features, reflecting the fashion for these decorative items at the time. The manager's accommodation upstairs, with the 1927 addition, provides an extra dimension to this building and its rear elevations.

The building is associated with the highly regarded Wellington firm, Crichton and McKay which was a partnership formed in 1901. Many successful buildings were designed and erected under the supervision of this firm, among them being the Bank of New South Wales, Bank of Australasia in Hunter Street and Customhouse Quay (that became the ANZ Bank), the bulk of the later buildings at Wellington hospital, the Dominion Building, Dalgety and Co, the Union Steam Ship Co. Building and many others. The firm set a high standard in good design and planning and the use of good materials.

Historic Qualities

For more than 120 years this site housed the Bank of New South Wales, one of the four main banks in New Zealand but one which no longer exists by that name. The building recalls a period of growth in Wanganui when banking business, as well as all other trade, was increasing rapidly.

Technical Qualities

The building uses typical construction techniques, materials and structural design for the period.

Cultural Qualities

The building is highly attractive and makes a significant architectural contribution to Victoria Avenue and to the OTCOZ.

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Reference Source:

W. Pettigrew – 2003 Wanganui District Heritage Inventory, No. B6.2.

1990 Wanganui Heritage Study item #6/8

Wanganui District Council Building files

Wanganui Borough Council Register of Building Permits

Wanganui Borough Council 1908 Insurance Assessment Plan – shows wooden building housing Bank of NSW on site.

Wanganui Herald 12/11/1886

Wanganui Herald 29/10/1910

Wanganui Herald 1/11/1910.

Wanganui Herald 3/11/1910.

Wanganui Chronicle 4/09/1961.

Wanganui Chronicle 9/10/1982.

River City Press 9/06/1989.

Wanganui Chronicle 16/05/1992.

Associated Pictures:

All pictures courtesy W. Pettigrew – 2003 Wanganui District Heritage Inventory.



The original Wunderlich ceilings are still in situ premises photograph taken in 2003 before renovations)



The 1927 rear addition for the manager's (photograph taken in 2003 before renovations)

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The bank as it appeared when built in 1910. Note trees in garden at rear. Frank Denton photograph, Alexander Turnbull Library No. 1/1 017399 G.



Photograph showing chimneys. ATL G16631 1-1

Another ATL photograph, No. 16356 1/1, shows the ceiling with the Wunderlich pressed steel centres.

Date of Survey: 2012

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