

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE  
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 152  
*COMMERCIAL BUILDING AND SETTING, FORMER COOK AND  
ROSS – 779 COLOMBO STREET, CHRISTCHURCH***



**PHOTOGRAPH: M.VAIR-PIOVA, 9/12/2014**

**HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Historical and social values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular person, group, organisation, institution, event, phase or activity; the continuity and/or change of a phase or activity; social, historical, traditional, economic, political or other patterns.*

The former Cook and Ross building has high historical significance for its long-standing association with the firm of Cook and Ross and as an interwar commercial building occupied by the National Bank for over 50 years before the Canterbury earthquakes. The building was erected in 1926 by Henry Owen, proprietor of Cook and Ross the chemists, to replace the firm's original 1859 premises on this site overlooking Market (Victoria) Square. At the time that it was demolished the original Cook and Ross building was thought to be the city's oldest commercial premises.

The business was started in 1859 by Drs Turnbull and Hilson and was taken over by J V Ross and Charles Cook in January 1863. Their partnership lasted only six years but the name of the firm persisted after Ross took over the company and ran it until his death in 1893. The southwestern side of Colombo Street where it intersects with Armagh Street became known Cook and Ross's Corner after the business. The Ross family continued running the business until it finally ceased trading in 1956. The building was then converted

into chambers for the National Bank and was renamed in the 1990s as Isaac House. It sustained some damage in the 2010 and 2011 Canterbury earthquakes and a repair and structural strengthening programme is being developed.

### **CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Cultural and spiritual values that demonstrate or are associated with the distinctive characteristics of a way of life, philosophy, tradition, religion, or other belief, including: the symbolic or commemorative value of the place; significance to Tangata Whenua; and/or associations with an identifiable group and esteemed by this group for its cultural values.*

The former Cook and Ross building has cultural significance as a now rare survivor post-quake in this immediate area and as a tangible reminder of societal inner city culture when commercial buildings once populated this intersection.

### **ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE**

*Architectural and aesthetic values that demonstrate or are associated with: a particular style, period or designer, design values, form, scale, colour, texture and material of the place.*

The former Cook and Ross building has high architectural significance as an example of the Georgian Revival style in a commercial building and as an example of the work of the architectural firm of Helmore and Cotterill, who were also leading exponents of the Georgian Revival style in their domestic architecture. Built in 1926, the building has a large basement, double-height ground floor, and three floors above; the uppermost being expressed as an attic lit by a series of dormer windows. Above the modified ground floor and suspended verandah, the cladding is brick with cement facings. The symmetry of each façade is emphasised by the central motif of a pedimented window at the second floor level. Six-light sash windows are the principal feature of the second and third floors and the building's classical pedigree can also be seen in the quoins and rusticated base. Georgian Revival commercial or public buildings are not common in Christchurch but the Cook and Ross building may be compared with the Worcester Chambers in Worcester Boulevard (Cecil Wood, 1928). In contrast however the former Cook and Ross building has two facades, given that it stands at a street corner, and is of a larger size and scale.

### **TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE**

*Technological and craftsmanship values that demonstrate or are associated with: the nature and use of materials, finishes and/or technological or constructional methods which were innovative, or of notable quality for the period.*

The former Cook and Ross building has technological and craftsmanship significance for what it may reveal of interwar building methodologies, construction, materials, fixtures and fittings and as a commercial building of this period clad in English bond brickwork with an internal structure of reinforced concrete.

### **CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE**

*Contextual values that demonstrate or are associated with: a relationship to the environment (constructed and natural), a landscape, setting, group, precinct or streetscape; a degree of consistency in terms of type, scale, form, materials, texture, colour, style and/or detail; recognised landmarks and landscape which are recognised and contribute to the unique identity of the environment.*

The former Cook and Ross building has high contextual significance for its landmark quality within Victoria Square. It is located at the intersection of Colombo and Armagh Streets, overlooking the open space of Victoria Square. This location, coupled with the building's atypical architectural style, has ensured that it has become as much a city landmark as its colonial predecessor. The red brick of its facades once established a relationship between the Cook and Ross building and the Venetian Gothic and commercial classical buildings that stood at 751 and 753/757 Colombo Street (now demolished) and it is now a reminder of the increasing rarity of brickwork within the central city since the Canterbury earthquakes of 2010-2011.

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE**

*Archaeological or scientific values that demonstrate or are associated with: the potential to provide information through physical or scientific evidence an understanding about social historical, cultural, spiritual, technological or other values of past events, activities, structures or people.*

The former Cook and Ross building has archaeological significance because it has the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900. Commercial premises have existed on this site, which is situated at the heart of colonial Christchurch, since 1859.

### **ASSESSMENT STATEMENT**

The former Cook and Ross building has high overall significance to Christchurch, including Banks Peninsula for its association with almost a century of pharmaceutical practice by Cook and Ross and as an interwar commercial building occupied by the National Bank for over 50 years. The building has historical significance as a business that was started in 1859 by Drs Turnbull and Hilson and was taken over by J V Ross and Charles Cook in January 1863. While their partnership lasted only six years the name of the firm remained after Ross took over the company and ran it until his death in 1893. The former Cook and Ross building has cultural significance as a now rare survivor post-quake in this immediate area and as a tangible reminder of societal inner city culture when commercial buildings once populated this intersection. It has high architectural significance as one of the city's few Georgian Revival commercial buildings designed by Helmore and Cotterill. It has technological and craftsmanship significance for what it may reveal of interwar building methodologies, construction, materials, fixtures and fittings. The former Cook and Ross building has high contextual significance for its prominent corner site overlooking Victoria Square. The former Cook and Ross building has archaeological significance because it has the potential to provide archaeological evidence relating to past building construction methods and materials, and human activity on the site, including that which occurred prior to 1900.

### **REFERENCES:**

Historic Place # 7383 – Heritage NZ List  
<http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/7383>

*Cyclopedia of New Zealand – Canterbury Provincial District* (Christchurch, 1903)

OPUS *Urban Conservation Areas Study* (Christchurch, 2005)  
<http://resources.ccc.govt.nz/files/OPUSUCAsStudy-docs.pdf>

**REPORT DATED: 17 JANUARY 2015**

PLEASE NOTE THIS ASSESSMENT IS BASED ON INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT THE TIME OF WRITING. DUE TO THE ONGOING NATURE OF HERITAGE RESEARCH, FUTURE REASSESSMENT OF THIS HERITAGE ITEM MAY BE NECESSARY TO REFLECT ANY CHANGES IN KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF ITS HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE.