

**DISTRICT PLAN – LISTED HERITAGE PLACE
HERITAGE ASSESSMENT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
HERITAGE ITEM NUMBER 515
FORMER TUAM STREET HALL AND SETTING –
214 TUAM STREET, CHRISTCHURCH**



PHOTOGRAPH: M.VAIR-PIOVA, 10/12/2014

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 Tuam Street Hall (also known variously as the Queen's Theatre, the Opera House, the St James' Theatre and the Odeon Theatre) has high historical and social significance as the oldest surviving meeting and entertainment venue in the city.

The Tuam Street Hall was opened by the Public Hall Company in July 1883, at a time when premises suitable for large gatherings were scarce in Christchurch. It therefore quickly became a popular venue for meetings, displays and entertainments. Kate Sheppard and the Women's Christian Temperance Union held suffrage meetings in the hall, and in November 1893 some of the first votes by women were cast there. The hall's history encapsulates more than a century of entertainment and performance in Christchurch, with the building serving variously as a public hall, lyric and vaudeville theatre, opera house, skating rink, cinema and church. The building is associated particularly with John Fuller and Sons, a prominent Australasian theatrical management company, who took over the hall in 1903 and retained ownership until its purchase by Kerridge-Odeon in 1960. The cinema finally closed after a century of operation in 1983, and was then purchased by the Assembly of God Church.

The former Tuam Street Hall has been vacant and under threat of demolition for two decades. A sustained preservation campaign was conducted by concerned citizens, who formed the Odeon Theatre Trust. The building suffered significant damage in the Canterbury

Earthquakes of 2010-2011, suffering partial collapse and was subsequently partially demolished in 2012. Its future is still being considered.

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 Tuam Street Hall has high cultural and spiritual significance as a venue for cultural and spiritual activity for more than 120 years. The Hall is held in high esteem by the Christchurch theatre and cinema communities and features strongly in the collective memories of citizens who attended events and performances in the building. The building has spiritual significance from its employment as a place of worship by the Assembly of God congregation during the 1980s and 1990s.

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 Tuam Street Hall has high architectural and aesthetic significance for its design by local architect T. S. Lambert and its later alterations by the Luttrell Brothers.

Edinburgh-trained Thomas Lambert (1840-1915) practised in Christchurch between 1874 and 1893 before relocating to Dunedin. Lambert was very active during his tenure in Canterbury; his better known works included the United Services Hotel (1883, demolished), Christchurch Synagogue (1880, demolished), Highlight House (c.1890, demolished) and the former Farmers' Co-operative Association of Canterbury building (1882, façade only) in Cashel Street, which is the only other of his significant Christchurch buildings to survive. Lambert gave his Tuam Street Hall building an ornate stone Italianate façade with a high parapet and dominant central pediment. There were originally shops on the street frontage.

The former Tuam Street Hall has undergone many alterations over its lifetime to adapt it to new uses. One of the most significant of these was an extensive rebuild of the auditorium and foyer in 1927-1928 by E. S. Luttrell to convert the hall for use as a modern lyric and picture theatre. The building was shorn of its pediment and much of its parapet after it was purchased by Kerridge-Odeon in 1960. It sustained severe damage in the Canterbury Earthquakes of 2010-2011, and the stage house and auditorium were largely demolished in 2012. The circle, foyer and Lambert's façade remain extant, but their future is not assured. The façade is currently restrained and concealed by shipping containers.

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 Tuam Street Hall has technological significance as a remnant of what was the oldest masonry theatre in New Zealand, and craftsmanship significance for its ornamental stone façade. Surviving interior features include a marble stair in the foyer, dating from the rebuild in the 1920s.

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 Tuam Street Hall has high contextual significance in relation to its site, setting and the wider context of the central city. The setting of building is its immediate land parcel. The extant section of the former hall (the façade and foyer) is on the parcel's Tuam Street frontage. The remainder of the site is largely covered by the building's demolished remnants, with a service court/carpark at the rear.

Although much of the central city's architectural heritage has been lost as a consequence of the Canterbury Earthquakes, small pockets remain. One of the most significant of these is the area of lower High Street, where a dozen listed heritage buildings survive in various states of completeness - including the former Tuam Street Hall. Although many surrounding buildings have gone, immediately adjacent the hall to the west is the former Lawrie and Wilson Auctioneers building (1910), a small but ornate Edwardian commercial building whose pedimented façade echoes the original appearance of its larger neighbour. Although the façade of the former hall is presently concealed by containers, it has the capacity to again become a city landmark.

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 Tuam Street Hall and setting are of archaeological significance because they have 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.

ASSESSMENT STATEMENT

The former Tuam Street Hall has overall heritage significance to the Christchurch, district including Banks Peninsula. The building has high historical and social significance as a remnant of the oldest surviving purpose-built meeting and performance venue in the central city, with more than a century of association with the theatre/cinema industry, and with other organisations, events and personalities such as Kate Sheppard and her crusade for women's suffrage. The former Tuam Street Hall has high cultural and spiritual significance as a venue for cultural and spiritual activity for more than 120 years. The Hall is held in high esteem by the Christchurch theatre and cinema communities and is esteemed by the wider community because of these associations. The building also has cultural and spiritual significance as a former home of the Assembly of God Church. The building has limited architectural and aesthetic significance as a result of damage by the Canterbury earthquake but is a notable surviving work by Thomas Lambert, who was responsible for the elaborate Italianate façade, and E. S. Luttrell. The building has technological significance as a remnant of New Zealand's oldest surviving masonry theatre, and craftsmanship significance for its ornamental façade and remaining interior elements. The Hall has contextual significance as

a pivotal element within the precinct of surviving heritage buildings in the lower High Street area. The former Tuam Street Hall and setting are of archaeological significance because they have 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:

CCC Heritage files - 214 Tuam Street

Historic place # 3140 – Heritage NZ List

<http://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/3140>

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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.

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