

## Former Rongotea BNZ – 11 Douglas Square, Rongotea



**Architect:** 1945, R & W Thorrold-Jaggard

**Construction date:** ca 1890, 1945

**Visible materials:** Painted timber weatherboards and joinery, corrugated steel roofing

**Architectural style:** Edwardian Italianate

**Use/building type:** Commercial

**Date and compiler:** Ian Bowman, 2015

**Proposed category:** B

### PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

#### Outline history

Based on its design and construction, the Bank of New Zealand Rongotea Branch building appears to have been constructed circa 1890. It is not known if this building was relocated to this site or was used for a different purpose until the BNZ opened its first branch office in Rongotea in the building on 14 July 1918. Until this time, the BNZ was served from Feilding from 1899. In 1945 the bank was extended by R Thorrold-Jaggard.

#### Architect

Reginald Thorrold-Jaggard was born and educated in England. He received his articles there before emigrating to New Zealand in 1913. He settled in Palmerston North and soon met and married Lily Daisy Collier who had been recruited in London by the local firm of Collinson and Cunningham as a

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<sup>1</sup> Former NZHPT Manawatu Branch Committee files

dressmaker. Jaggard was initially in the employ of Oscar Jorgeson, a well known local architect, before setting up his own practice. In the ensuing years many local buildings and domestic dwellings were designed by Jaggard. Among those still standing are the former Hepworth Building (1917), King St Flats (1925), Square Edge (1945), Ward Brothers building (1936), Family Entertainment Centre, The Square (1935) and House, 314 Church St. The firm was carried on by his son Bill Thorrold-Jaggard who sold the business in 1962.

## **BNZ<sup>2</sup>**

The Bank of New Zealand was not the country's first bank but it was certainly the most successful of the many that started in the 19th century.

The Bank opened for business 16 October 1861, in premises in Queen Street. Set up under its own Act of Parliament it was established and funded by a clique of Auckland businessmen, and others around the country. There had been much interest in the establishment of a truly New Zealand bank; prior to this banks had largely been overseas-based institutions. The Bank of New Zealand quickly expanded and by the end of 1862 had offices in all the larger New Zealand towns. Shareholder support was enlisted in a series of meetings around the country.

In this fashion Wellington branch was opened, initially in Swinburne's Steam Packet Hotel, Willis Street, on 15 January 1862. The prompt erection, at a cost of nearly 8,000 pounds, of a substantial new building designed by the country's leading architect, William Mason, signalled the Bank's confidence in its future. Completed in 1863, the building was altered inside in 1873/74 and then added to three years later. It was finally replaced in 1901.

A London office was opened in 1862 and this played a major role in facilitating trade between New Zealand, Great Britain and Europe. The Bank of New Zealand derived much of its early prosperity from the discovery of gold in Otago and the expansion of the pastoral industry in the South Island. By the early 1870s 56 offices had been opened around New Zealand and the following decade was generally a prosperous one. The Bank's operations continued to expand and offices were opened in Melbourne in 1872 and Sydney in 1875. In 1876 an office was opened in Fiji. The Bank also shared in the prosperity encouraged by the Vogel immigration and public works policies. In this decade Bank capital doubled from 500,000 pounds to 1 million pounds. Lending and profits consequently rose.

The end of the Vogel initiatives and a fall in world commodity prices started a depression in the mid-1880s which lasted for nearly 20 years. The down-turn was reflected in the failure of the Bank to pay a dividend in the second half of 1887. A government appointed inquiry into the Bank's affairs discovered that in excess of 320,000 pounds had been lost on insufficiently secured loans or by dishonest management.

In 1890 the head office was moved to London, although the General Manager stayed in Auckland. At the same time the assets the Bank acquired from the depression were put in a separate company, the Bank of New Zealand Estates Company. However this company continued to make losses and eventually the Government had to rush to the Bank's aid. In one dramatic night, 29 June 1894, a bill was passed to provide a two-million pound share issue and the Government assumed a considerable role in the Bank's affairs.

One of the conditions of the share issue was that the head office had to be moved to Wellington. This had obvious implications for the Wellington office, which was only a branch. A new building was planned, and completed in 1901, and the progress made by the Bank in the 20th century is reflected

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<sup>2</sup> Bowman, I, *Conservation Plan former BNZ Buildings, Wellington, 1992, unpublished*

in the subsequent growth in accommodation, to the point now where the branch and head office are accommodated in one of the city's biggest buildings.

The Bank of New Zealand bought the Colonial Bank of New Zealand in 1895. The purchase of this bank, which was founded in 1874 and latterly struggled in the poor economic times, helped strengthen the Bank's trading position. From 1899 the Bank's fortunes greatly improved. Dividend payments to shareholders recommenced in 1902.

The outbreak of war in 1914 saw a brief dip in the Bank's fortunes but eventually the war only improved demand for New Zealand's primary products. Circumstances also forced the Bank to hire women to replace the men who had gone to fight. This substantial change in staffing structures was repeated in the Second World War. By 1926 capital stood at over 5,600,000 pounds, of which the Government held one-third. Later, in 1945, privately held shares were compulsorily acquired by the Government in exchange for cash or government bonds. The Government's ownership of the Bank has only recently been relinquished.

Since 1945 the huge advances in technology have had a major effect on banking operations. During the 1950s hand-posted ledgers were replaced by electronic machines and later still by electronic calculators. The first computer was acquired in 1966.

With the progress in technology the Bank, in common with other trading banks, instituted a number of initiatives, such as direct crediting and debiting and automatic payments, designed to speed up the banking process. Later the major trading banks formed a consortium to run Databank Systems Ltd, a company which electronically processes all banking transactions.

Diversification of the Bank's interests saw it buy or establish a number of companies. The BNZ Finance Company, 75% owned by the Bank, and BNZ Investments Ltd, are just two examples of such associated companies.

In recent years the arrival of credit cards, automatic teller machines and EFT-POS (Electronic Funds Transfer at Point of Sale) have all greatly altered, and improved, the banking process.

## **ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN**

The building has been designed in the Victorian Italianate style, a style favoured by banks as it referred to the palaces of the wealthy Renaissance merchants.

This Italianate commercial style was a part of the classical revival of the nineteenth century which was championed by Sir Charles Barry from the 1840's in his design of clubs and smaller office buildings. His preferred style was the sixteenth century Italian Palazzo and he was also influential in using this style for large country houses for the wealthy. Commercial buildings, particularly banks, preferred the use of classical architecture, and the design of C R Cockerell's Sun Fire and Life Assurance building of 1838-42 in Threadneedle Street confirmed the Italianate Palazzo style. The design of larger structures using classical language was easily solved using the Palazzo style and quickly saw warehouses and multi-storey offices and other buildings adopt the Italianate Palazzo style. Architects such as Edward Walters, J E Gregan, Edward l'Anson, and John Gibson, popularized the style in England while Scottish architects also took up the style with gusto. 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 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'.

Originally a very modest building, its scale was considerably enhanced by the large parapet with entablature supported on solid Ionic pilasters. The round headed windows and keystones are also details commonly used with the style, while the spreading architraves of the windows and doors above the sill suggest a Georgian influence.

In an interior inspection of 1996, the banking chamber of the building maintains original features of timber dado, four panel doors, architraves and skirtings, while the original lean-to also retains the match lining to the ceiling and walls. The Thorrold-Jaggard addition has been lined in hardboard.

Its style and scale give a quaintness to the building while its location in a sparsely populated town square contribute to its urban design qualities.

No plans of the building have been sighted and the interior of the building was not inspected in 2015.

### REVIEW OF REPORT

Based on a review of the report and viewing of Council files, the assessment undertaken in 2015 for this building is still applicable as at April 2021.

### SUMMARY OF HERITAGE VALUES

The building has **moderate** to **high local** significance for **physical, historic** and **cultural** heritage values.

The former BNZ building has **high architectural** and **representivity** values as a good example of the Victorian Italianate Commercial style with typical characteristics of Classical detailing and proportions, symmetry, round headed windows and horizontality. It was a common style for banks from the 1840s in England and there are many examples in New Zealand in the later Victorian and Edwardian periods.

The building has **moderate rarity** values as a rare surviving local example of a late nineteenth century bank building.

The exterior appears to have **high authenticity** with little obvious external changes.

The building and site have **high associative** values with the BNZ, a significant national bank in New Zealand.

The design and construction of the building has **high pattern** and **education** values reflecting the history of the growth and development of the small rural town from the late Victorian period.

### SOURCES

Bowman, I, *Conservation Plan former BNZ Buildings, Wellington*, 1992, unpublished Former NZHPT  
Former NZHPT Manawatu Branch Committee files