

# THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF CHRISTCHURCH

## 5. Government Buildings



CHRISTCHURCH CITY COUNCIL  
TOWN PLANNING DIVISION





## Preface

Christchurch has a charm that depends to a large extent on features built or planned by man. The quiet dignity of the city owes much to its early buildings. It is still possible to trace the history of Christchurch in the many fine examples of colonial architecture that remain. Action by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (Canterbury Regional Committee) and other public interest groups has saved several important city buildings including the Provincial Government Buildings, Trinity Church, the Theatre Royal and the old university (now the Christchurch Arts Centre).

As the city grows and changes, there is a danger that historically or environmentally valuable buildings may be thoughtlessly or needlessly destroyed. The Christchurch City Council District Planning Scheme lists 190 historic buildings and objects. Although the scheme encourages their preservation, in the end only the determination of the community can effectively protect or revitalise buildings it considers important.

One of the major aims of the present series of booklets is the identification and description of the city's most valuable historic buildings, in the hope that greater public awareness of their importance will increase their chances of survival. Even if preservation should prove impossible in some cases, this series will gather information, illustrations and analyses of each building to provide a published record of the city's rich architectural heritage.

If these booklets encourage you to think about the historic significance of this city's architecture, and help you to recognise the special value of Christchurch's historic buildings, then they will have served their purpose.



# Government Buildings

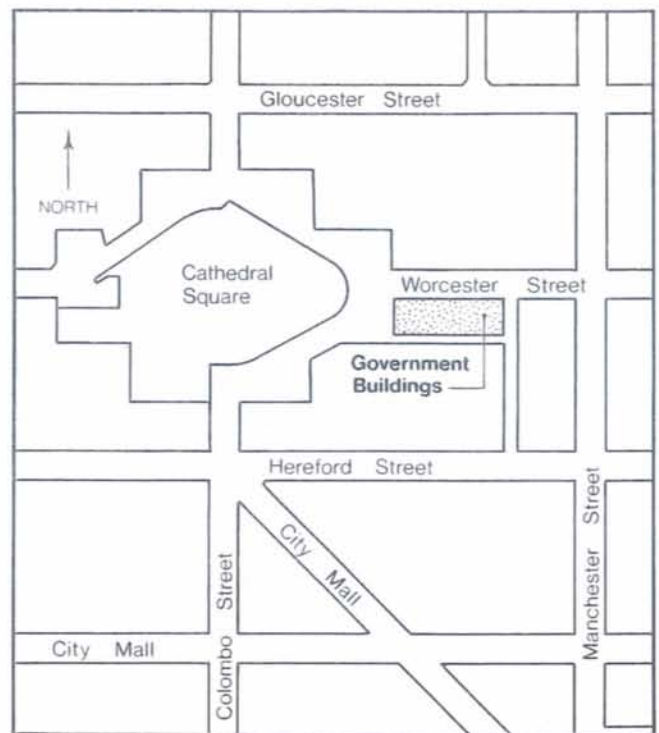
## Introduction

The Government Buildings at 28-30 Cathedral Square were designed in 1909 to accommodate many of the Government Departments in Christchurch. It has served that role for seventy years yet shows little evidence of change to its external appearance, and internally it retains many of its generous and spacious rooms. It is those spaces which help to make the building distinctive - few public buildings today are so well provided for, and its classical ornamentation is rare within the City.

The New Zealand Historic Places Trust has classified the building "B" signifying it as "a building which merits preservation because of its very great historical significance or architectural quality". It has been acknowledged that the Government Buildings form part of an important precinct of historic buildings comprising the Anglican Cathedral, Warners Hotel, the Press Building, State Insurance Building and State Trinity Centre.

This precinct forms an important part of the townscape and this gives added weight to arguments about the building's future. The present occupants, the Ministry of Works and Development, are soon to move to a new building nearby and considerable thought is being given to the future of Government Buildings.

Deciding on its future brings together the usual conservation dilemmas; it is an earthquake risk yet it has been well maintained, it is not an efficient building in modern terms but it could be modified to a range of uses, it is on a prime central city site and its demolition would remove an important land mark as well as a distinguished piece of public sector architecture. It is to be hoped that a satisfactory solution to the dilemma will be found.



## Plans for the Government Buildings

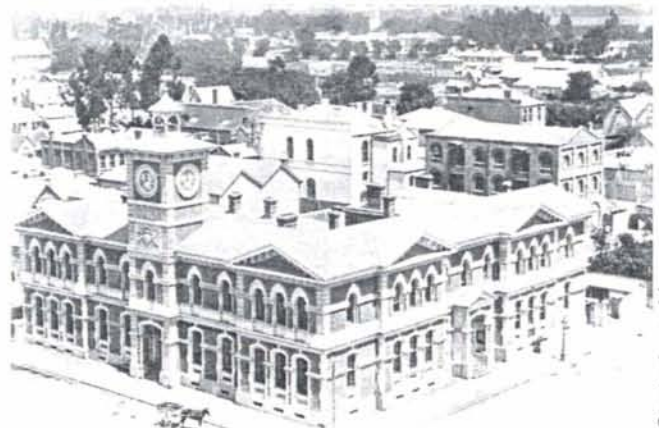
The proposal to build the new Government Departmental Buildings in Christchurch came at a time when the Government of Sir Joseph Ward sought to match the growth in population and economic welfare with suitable Government services. There was a large public works programme being carried out throughout the country with post offices, telegraph offices, railway stations, hospitals and various departmental buildings being built.

The contracts let by the Government were expected to support local building firms and to provide confidence. It was estimated that two-thirds of the expenditure on a building was for materials and labour, both usually supplied locally. When opening the Government Buildings the Premier expressed the hope that the contractors

"... would make a fair profit out of the undertaking of the kind they were engaged in. He did not think that the Government contracts should be let at such a price that would impose loss upon the contractor, or cause him in any way to do anything that was not fair to a large section of the different branches of labour that must be engaged in connection with the building."<sup>1</sup>

The present Chief Post Office in Cathedral Square was the forerunner of the new Departmental Buildings. It had been completed in 1879 and housed insurance, post office, public works and customs departments. However as the Government services grew, it was necessary to house some Departments in cramped conditions in other buildings throughout the city such as the old Provincial Buildings. The Government was concerned to obtain an effective solution to this situation. Extensions to the present Chief Post Office were seen to be an expensive temporary solution while a considerable financial outlay was involved in the renting of office space. It was calculated that a saving in rents of £1,000 each year was possible with a new central building.<sup>2</sup>

The Government's proposal was for the Departments of Customs, State Fire Insurance, State Coal, Public Works, Labour, Stamps, Valuation, Inspection of Machinery, Official Assignee, Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, Old



Canterbury Museum

*The Chief Post Office — the original Government Buildings*

Age Pensions, and the Public Trust Office, to be transferred to the new building. Offices for Ministers of the Crown were also to be provided on the top floor.

The need to cater for future expansion was recognised in the design brief which required the building to be capable of taking an additional two or three floors on top of the two stories that were built.

A group of executive officers advised the Government upon the details of the building, but it is not known how this group worked with the architect, nor is it known how it came to be that J C Maddison was selected to design the building.<sup>3</sup>

The site chosen for the new building comprised part Town Sections 739, 741, 743 and 745 covering an area of 1890m<sup>2</sup>. This land was owned by an English absentee landowner, the Rev Thomas Rowley. The land was leased to a succession of people from 1863 and administered by trustees. In 1879 a 21 year lease was entered into with the Canterbury Tramway Company Limited but this was surrendered in

<sup>1</sup>The Press 21 November, 1911

<sup>2</sup>Ibid

<sup>3</sup>A search of Christchurch newspapers from 12 August, 1907 to 1 September, 1910 failed to find any tender, public notices or Government notice inviting designs for the Government Buildings.



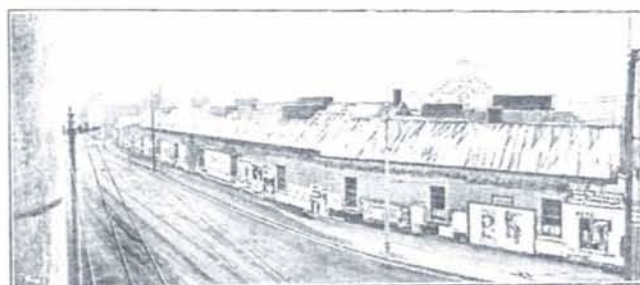
An aerial photograph of a village. In the foreground, a long, light-colored building, likely a school, runs diagonally. To its right is a church with a prominent steeple. The village is surrounded by trees and other smaller buildings. The image is in black and white.

Canterbury Museum

## The landowner

His son Thomas Rowley junior, arrived in Canterbury in February 1853 on the "Minerva". In March 1856 he claimed R.S.85 of 200 acres near Riccarton on behalf of his father (this had been the subject of another land order taken out at the same time as R.S.63).<sup>9</sup> R.S.85 had been given to Rev Rowley as a Crown Grant as were eight quarter-acre sections in Christchurch. These Town Sections, No's 739, 741, 743, 745, 746, 747, 748 and 750 comprised the bulk of the block contained by Cathedral Square, Worcester Street, Manchester Street and Hereford Street. In July 1857 Rowley junior passed his interest in the Town Sections to George Arthur Emilius Ross and Rev Croaisdale Bowen. These men were given the right to hold and use this land as they saw fit while Rowley retained the title to the land. Subsequently the Town Sections were leased and had mortgages raised on them until the Government acquired the land under the Public Works Act in 1908.

The tender for the construction of the Government Buildings was advertised by Maddison in *The Press* on 2 July, 1910 with a closure date of 15 August, 1910 at the Public Works Office, Wellington.

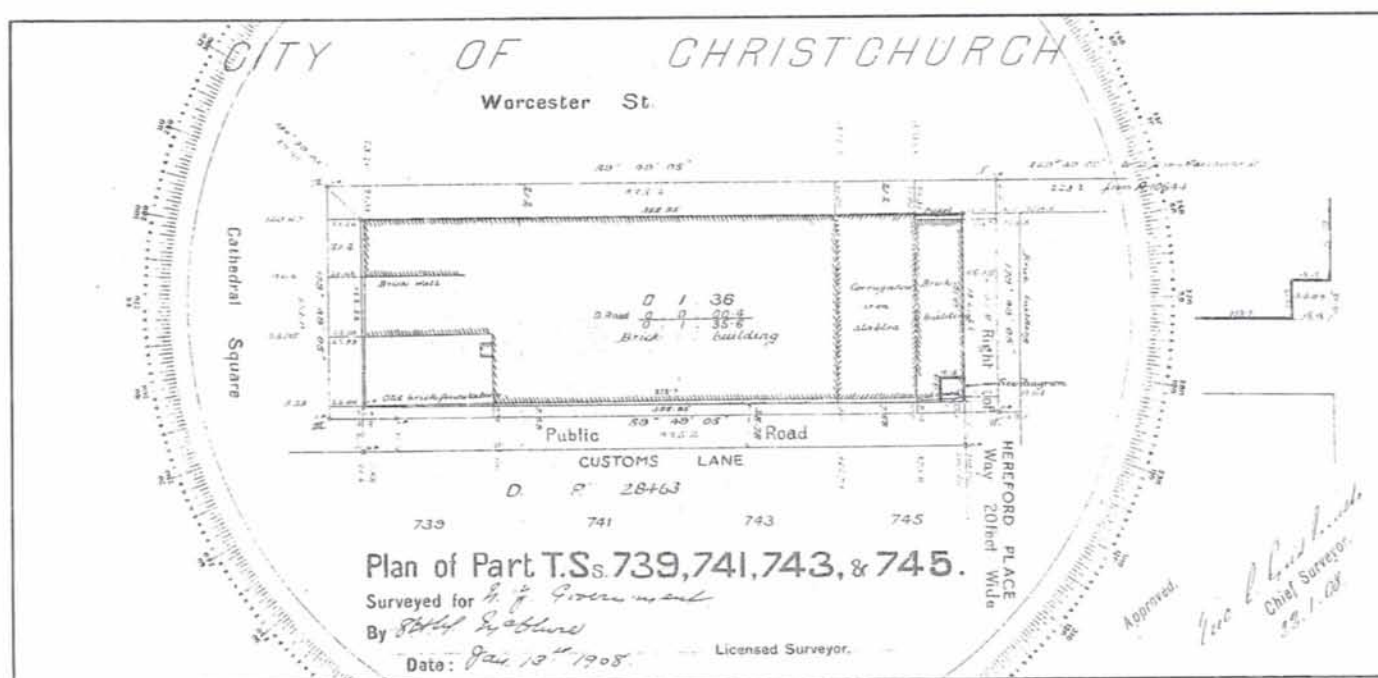


The Weekly Press



Thomas Rowley

Canterbury Museum



Adapted from Lands and Survey Department Records

<sup>5</sup>Macdonald notes that it was unknown how much he was working in his father's interests and how much in his own in his land dealings. The

*Lands & Deeds records show that Rev Rowley conveyed a half share in all his land to his son in a deed dated 10 May, 1860.*

Rowley junior made his home at the farm "Middleton" in Canterbury from where he was active in buying sheep runs.<sup>6</sup> He purchased "Sandy Knolls" about 1854 and sold it in 1860 to buy Alford with Frederick Tooth. At other times he owned "Homebrook", "Clent Hills", and "Mt Possession" which he sold in 1864. Rowley seemed to use "Middleton" as his base and either leased his runs or appointed managers to run them for him.

In 1857 Rowley was married by Bishop Harper to Emily Eliza Marianne Mathias, the eldest daughter of the Rev

Octavius Mathias, at St Peters, Riccarton.<sup>7</sup> Rowley was an original trustee, treasurer and church warden at St Peters. He was elected to the Christchurch Club in 1860, and the General Assembly for Ellesmere in 1861 but resigned from the Assembly in 1862. Rowley played for the Christchurch Cricket Club in 1853.

He returned to England with his wife and four children in 1864 on the "White Star" and settled in Guernsey. In 1867 he sent ferrets and small birds to Canterbury. Rowley died at Southwold, Suffolk in 1903.

## The Architect

Joseph Clarkson Maddison was born in Greenwich, England in 1850. He was educated at private schools before being articled to George Morris, an established London architect, with whom he worked for five years. For a short time he practiced professionally in London before sailing for New Zealand. He arrived in 1872 at Lyttelton aboard the "Gladstone" and commenced his architectural practice in Christchurch. His earliest recorded office was given as Cashel Street (1875-76)<sup>8</sup> although from 1878-1916 he occupied an office variously described as 183, 187 or 189 Hereford Street.<sup>9</sup>

On 12 October, 1873 Maddison married Jane Midmore, the daughter of a Kentish surveyor. He described himself as a carpenter in the marriage register.<sup>10</sup> They had three daughters.

Maddison was a prolific architect. He designed a great number of commercial buildings although he was also responsible for a range of residential and industrial projects. He was regarded as "one of the leading architects in New Zealand"<sup>11</sup> and is credited with establishing himself "as the chief industrial architect in Canterbury during the province's first phase of factory construction in the later 1870's and 1880's. Mainly designed in variations of the classical manner, his buildings are distinguished by a large scale and use of brickwork."<sup>12</sup>

Commercial buildings designed by Maddison included premises for J Ballantyne and Company, Beath and Company (Cashel/Colombo Streets) and Wardell Bros (High/Cashel Streets). His hotel designs included the Zetland (Cashel Street), the Carlton (Bealey Avenue), Foresters and Clarendon (Oxford Terrace), Eastern (Fitzgerald Avenue) and the Prince of Wales (Colombo Street). Warehouses were built for Kaiapoi Woollen Manufacturing Company Limited, Chrystall and Company and Mason Struthers and Company (Lichfield Street). Office buildings Maddison designed included Worcester House (Cashel Street), Rhodes Buildings (now Epworth Chambers, Manchester Street), Clarkson Building and the National Mutual Life Association Building (Hereford Street).

Maddison designed many industrial buildings, particularly freezing works. In 1906 the *Weekly Press* noted that "for freezing works alone during the last few years works costing £397,000 have passed through Mr Maddison's hands"<sup>13</sup> His designs in Canterbury included the Canterbury Frozen Meat and Dairy Produce Export Company Limited

J. C. Maddison



The Weekly Press

works at Belfast, the Christchurch Abattoirs and Fairfield Freezing Works at Ashburton (1899). His other industrial commissions ranged from the Wood and Company Limited brick mill at Addington, to additions to the Crown Brewery (Christchurch) and the North Canterbury Hospital Board's steam laundry.

Maddison's other work ranged from designing the New Zealand International Exhibition building of 1906-7 in Hagley Park to designing the Seddon Memorial Belfry at St Marys Church, Addington. Two Anglican churches which were his work were Holy Trinity (Amberley) and the Port Levy church. He also designed the recently demolished Nurses'



Carlton Hotel



Woods flour mill, 1911

Canterbury Times

<sup>6</sup>Macdonald Biographies

<sup>7</sup>This was the first marriage on the Church's register.

<sup>8</sup>Lyttelton Times 9 October, 1875 p1. He described himself as architect and building surveyor

<sup>9</sup>Wises Directory 1872 - The site is now occupied by IBIS House

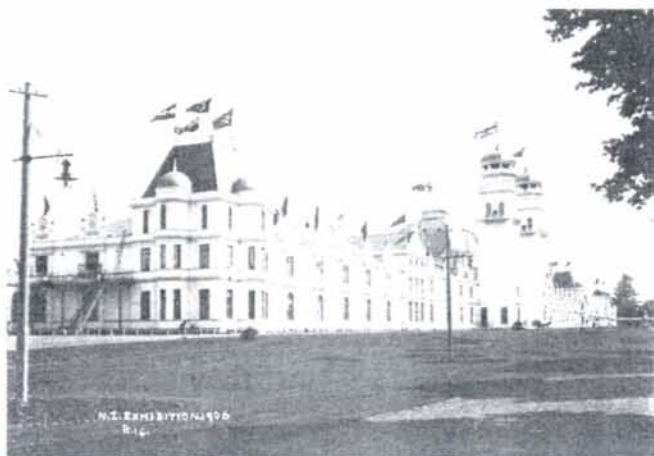
<sup>10</sup>Macdonald Biographies

<sup>11</sup>The Weekly Press 9 August, 1905 pp 44

<sup>12</sup>History of Canterbury v II pp 487-9

<sup>13</sup>Weekly Press 31 January, 1906





Canterbury Museum

New Zealand International Exhibition building



Canterbury Times

THE ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION FOR THE NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING. THE DESIGN SUBMITTED BY MR. J. MADDISON OF CHRISTCHURCH

## The builder

The builders of the Government Buildings J and W Jamieson, was one of the oldest building and contracting firms in Canterbury and was "acknowledged to be one of the leading building firms in New Zealand."<sup>14</sup>

The firm had been founded in 1864 by Samuel Jamieson, a joiner by trade. He had lived in Glasgow before sailing with his wife, Maria, and their four children on the "Captain Cook" to Lyttelton in September, 1863. Jamieson was then aged 42.<sup>15</sup> His work yard at 49 Colombo Street occupied one and a half acres, a fair reflection of the scale of the firm's activities. His sons, James and William, eventually carried on the business and it is their initials which were used in the firm's name.

The Jamiesons clearly were innovative and progressive builders: before building the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Barbadoes Street between 1901-5 one of the partners visited Europe to obtain the latest techniques, and special equipment for the construction of large stone buildings. Two steam cranes were used to lift some of the heavy masonry; they were the first to be used in New Zealand in this type of work. The firm patented a stone-planing and moulding machine and imported a large horizontal saw from Aberdeen for hard stone work. In addition J and W Jamieson possessed a very large lathe for turning the huge interior columns and had two large hand cranes with a lifting capacity of seven tonnes each.<sup>16</sup>

Building contracts awarded to J and W Jamieson Ltd included some large buildings in addition to the Roman Catholic Cathedral. These included the Christchurch Press Company office in Cathedral Square, Bing Harris and Company's warehouse at 65 Manchester Street, several large grain sheds in Lyttelton and Christchurch, and the Auckland Central Post Office. Other contracts included freezing works at Belfast, Wanganui, and Fairfield, as well as the Christchurch City Abattoirs. The firm built Captain R Heaton Rhode's house "Otahuna" and Mr G G Stead's house "Strowan".

Home (1891) on the corner of Oxford Terrace and Riccarton Avenue.

Although most of his work was based in Christchurch, Maddison designed a wide range of buildings throughout New Zealand. In Ashburton he designed the Fairfield Freezing Works (1899) and the new Somerset Hotel. The freezing works at Pareora were built to his design as were those at Waitara, Puki Puki (Hastings) and Ngahauranga (Wellington). In Wellington he also designed a number of commercial buildings in Cuba and Willis Streets and Lambton Quay. His commissions in Palmerston North are known to include the Grand Hotel, commercial premises for A Sutherland, and a large house "Merchiston."

Maddison entered several architectural competitions. His most notable effort was in the competition for the Christchurch Town Hall and Municipal Buildings in 1879 on the present Town Hall site. Maddison's entries under the non-de-plume "Avon" were awarded first and second placings but the building was never erected.

Although the entry by Maddison for the 1911 competition for Parliament Buildings, Wellington was unsuccessful it is of interest as a more grandiose and more richly decorated development of his 1909 design for the Government Buildings, Christchurch.

In 1887 Maddison was elected a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects and in 1905 elected a Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Architects. He entered a partnership with D Brown in 1913. Maddison was a keen outdoor bowler. He was President of the Christchurch Bowling Club on six occasions and donated a trophy for competition. He was also a member of the Christchurch Licensing Committee.

He shifted houses in Christchurch several times living in Gloucester Street Linwood, 44 Springfield Road, Webb Street, and at "Chiselhurst" 250 Oxford Terrace at various times. His wife died in 1920 and Maddison died in 1923 at a private hospital in Napier. He is buried at Holy Trinity Church, Avonside.



William Jamieson



James Jamieson

Cyclopedia of N.Z.



Roman Catholic Cathedral

<sup>14</sup>Cyclopedia of New Zealand (1903) v III p 294

<sup>15</sup>The shipping passenger lists held at the Canterbury Museum give Jamieson's age as 38.

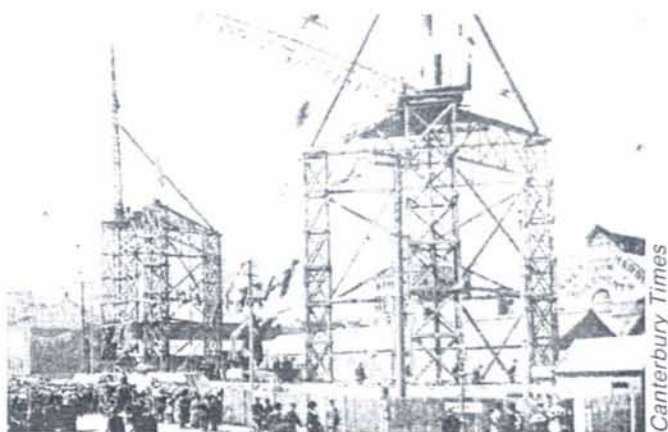
<sup>16</sup>Cyclopedia of New Zealand (1903) v III p 294



# Laying the foundation stone

The foundation stone was formally laid at a ceremony performed by the Prime Minister Sir Joseph G Ward on 20 November, 1911 before a large crowd. *The Press* reported that

"the cranes and gantrys made an effective scheme of decoration possible. Flags of all nations, and streamers of every colour, fluttered from the ropes spread from point to point. A corner which has a very work-a-day appearance on ordinary days was converted into quite a gay quarter..."



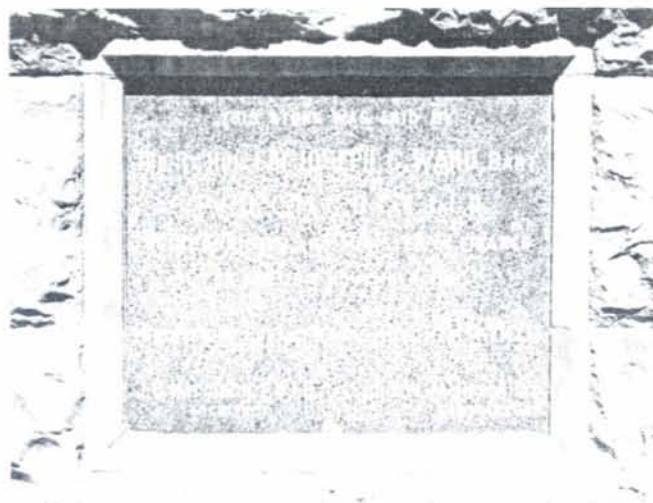
Canterbury Times

The Mayor of Christchurch presided, and among those present were the Hon. Sir Charles Bowen (Speaker of the Legislative Council), Hon. J A Millar (Minister of Railways), Hon. John Barr and Hon. H F Wigram, MLC's; Messrs L M Isitt, G W Russell, T H Davey, H G Ell, G Witty, MP's and representatives of public departments and local bodies. There was also a large number of ladies present."<sup>17</sup>

The foundation stone is of Coromandel granite and was placed to the west of the Worcester Street entrance. It bears the inscription —

"This stone was laid by the Rt. Hon. Sir Joseph G Ward, Bart., PC., KCMG., DCL., LL.D., Prime Minister, and Minister of Finance, on 20 November 1911. Minister of Public Works, Hon. R. McKenzie, J Maddison, FRIBA., Architect. J and W Jamieson, Limited contractors."

In his opening remarks the Mayor, Mr J J Dougall, expressed satisfaction at the prospect of having a building in Christchurch worthy of the Government and the City. He believed that the citizens would be proud to have a Government building which was of a character "suitable to the importance of the City."<sup>18</sup>

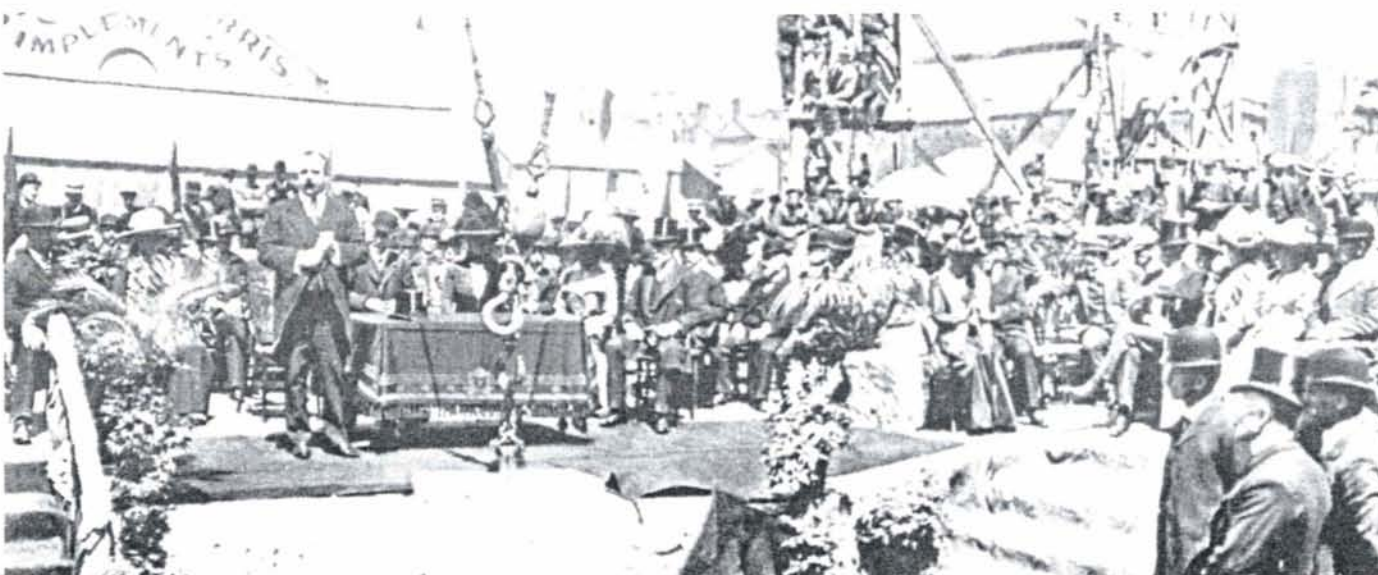


Sir Joseph Ward commented in his speech that buildings such as the Government Buildings were essential if public services were to better meet the demands associated with expansion of trade and the development of towns. The Government's programme of building throughout the country was based on this promise. He said that

"The policy of the Government was to erect substantial buildings of good design, not buildings like the cheap and nasty sort erected many years ago that had to be pulled down and rebuilt."<sup>19</sup>



Canterbury Times



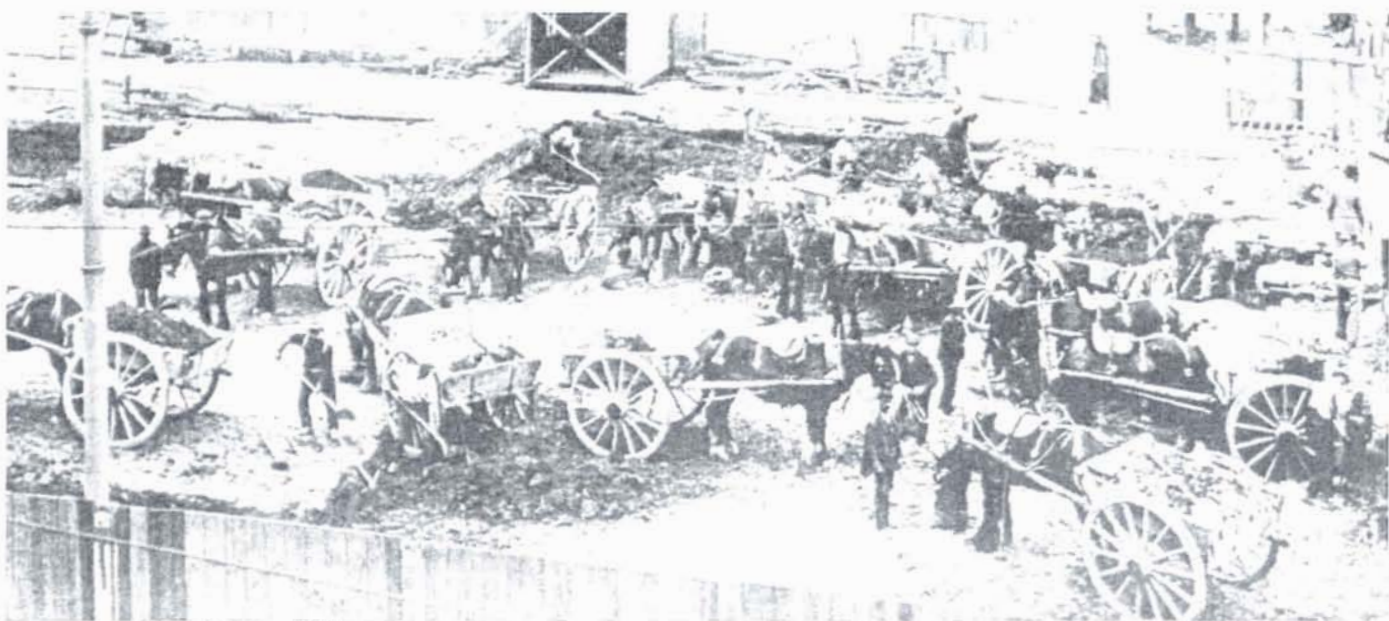
The Weekly Press

<sup>17</sup>*The Press* 21 November, 1911

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid*





Excavation work, October 1910

## Construction

The successful tenderer for the Government Buildings<sup>20</sup> was a local Christchurch firm J and W Jamieson Limited. The acceptance date for contract No 996 was 1 September, 1910 with a completion date of 1 May, 1912. The amount of the contract was £53,564.

The Annual Report on Buildings by the Government Architect in 1911 stated that work on the site had begun.

"Excavations for foundations have been taken out. It has been found necessary to pile these, and of the piling required about two thirds has been driven. Stonework is being prepared."<sup>21</sup>

The references to piling are interesting; it was mentioned at the foundation stone laying ceremony, and it invited comment in a *Press* editorial, however no details of the piling operations have been discovered in Ministry of Works and Development records.

By November 1911 the building form was taking shape. *The Press* reported that the foundations were complete and that the contractors had "raised portions of the outside walls to a height of seven or eight feet."<sup>22</sup>

Progress with the contract appears to have been steady. The Government Architect's report in 1912 noted that "the Contractors are making satisfactory progress with the erection of new Departmental Buildings (Brick and stone)..."<sup>23</sup>. However delays with the work must have arisen because the contractors were unable to complete the contract on time or on budget. The Government Architect reported in 1913 that "This fine building...is approaching completion...Contracts have been let for installing fire alarms, electric light, and electric clocks."<sup>24</sup>

The building contractors completed their work in March, 1913 but at an extra cost of £10,816, a small portion of which was recoverable by them as reductions.<sup>25</sup>

The Minister of Public Works, the Hon W Fraser, was finally able to report in his Public Works Statement of 1913 that:

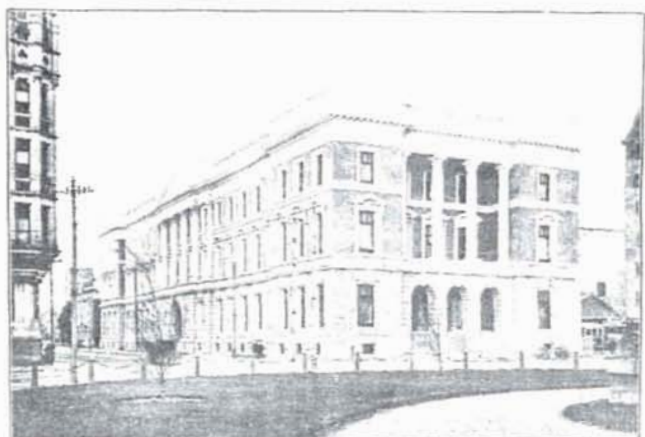
"The most important departmental building completed during the year was the new offices facing Cathedral Square and Worcester Street, Christchurch, which will accommodate most of the officials now located in the old Provincial Buildings, as well as an appreciable number occupying rented offices in various parts of the city."<sup>26</sup>

There is no record of an opening ceremony for the building. Newspaper reports suggest that the decorating and furnishing of the offices delayed occupation of the building until after July, 1913. A photograph in *The Canterbury Times* of 30 July, 1913 has a caption stating that the new



Cathedral Square, Christchurch, from the East. A New View presented by the demolition of the old Treasury Shed.

Government Buildings "will soon be ready for occupation".<sup>27</sup> A similar report in *The Weekly Press* of 23 July, 1913 states that the building "is to be opened next month."<sup>28</sup> A search of subsequent newspapers has failed to find any reports of the first occupation of the Government Buildings - this is quite surprising given the practise for newspapers of the time to fully report on the completion of major office or commercial buildings in the city.



<sup>20</sup>The contract records and official reports always refer to the "Departmental Buildings, Christchurch." A list of unsuccessful tenderers is given in *The New Zealand Gazette*, 1910 p 3592.

<sup>21</sup>*AJHR* D-1 1911 Appendix p 67

<sup>22</sup>*The Press* 21 November, 1911

<sup>23</sup>*AJHR* D-1 1912 p 84

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid* 1913

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid* 1914 p 62

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid* 1913 p xi

<sup>27</sup>*The Canterbury Times* 30 July, 1913 p 46

<sup>28</sup>*The Weekly Press* 23 July, 1913 p 33



# The building

The Government Building is rectangular in plan with the outside dimensions being 79.25 m (260 ft) long, 19.8 m (65 ft) average width and height. The building consists of a basement and three floors. The reinforced concrete piles are 7.315 m (24 ft) long except for those at the west end of the building where they are 5.48 m (18 ft) long. The upper level walls are constructed of solid brick with cement mortar, while the north and west ground floor walls have an external limestone covering integral with the brickwork. The stud heights vary from 5.334 m (17'6") on the ground floor to 4.724 m (15'6") on the second floor. The roof is constructed of 254 mm (10") concrete.

The building has a single central staircase with landings made of reinforced concrete. It is divided on each floor by a corridor running east-west and has no transverse walls continuous across the building. There are only two full height internal walls running north-south, located each side of the entrance and extending from the corridor to the northern wall. The section to the rear of the corridor is divided into two approximately equal areas by the centrally positioned stairwell. In these two areas there are smaller spaces (strongrooms, washrooms, lavatories, offices, etc) giving a permanent close-celled structure, this pattern being common to each floor.

The gross floor area of the building (external dimensions) is 6280m<sup>2</sup> comprising approximately 1550m<sup>2</sup> on each floor. There is a large floor area devoted to corridors and service areas. A Ministry of Works and Development calculation of nett area (that which is functional to the occupation of rooms) yields only 2986m<sup>2</sup>.

The existing heating system was installed in 1911 when the building was erected. It consists of a one pipe system serving cast iron radiators. This reticulation system is heated by an oil fired plant located in the basement.

The main roof was replaced in 1979 with Nuralite asbestos cement roofing and standing seam galvanised roofing.

Numerous crack patterns in the brick and concrete walls throughout the building developed over the years as a result of earthquakes and differential settlement in the southwest corner.

In 1960 Cook Construction Company Limited were awarded a contract worth £42,685 to remove surplus weight in the form of parapets from the building, and to strengthen it. The parapets were considered also to be a serious seismic hazard. It took 19 months to complete the contract.

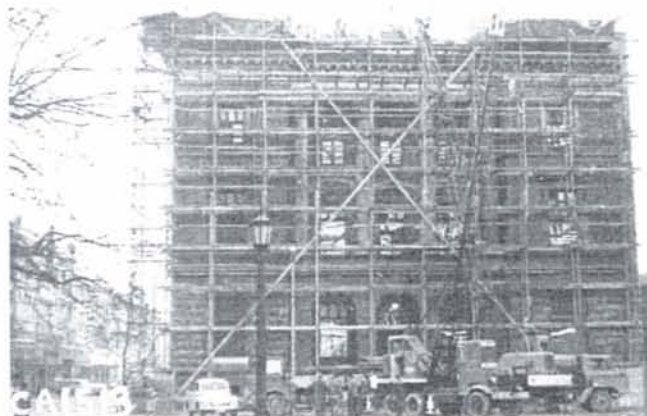
A force 5 earthquake on 25 January, 1968 caused new cracks to open up, and plaster to fall from second floor ceilings. The Wahine storm of 10-12 April the same year caused small but significant movements in the building tending to confirm opinions that it was deteriorating.

A further earthquake on 24 May, 1968 had the unanticipated effect of closing many of the cracks opened up by the Wahine storm.

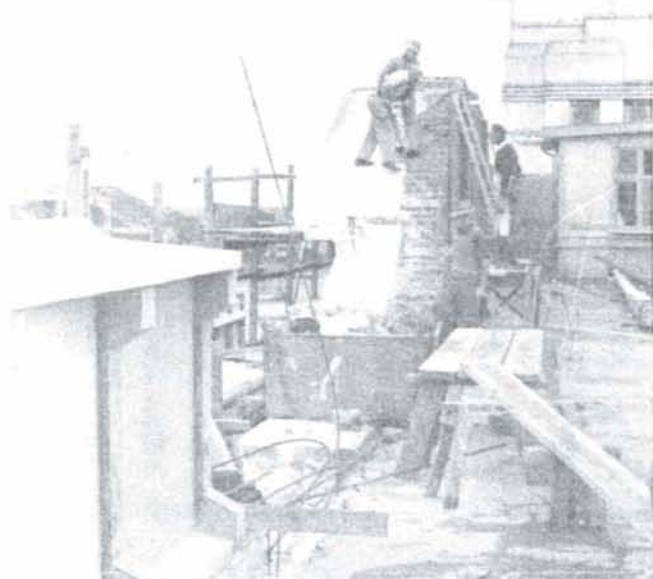
In the southwest corner of the Government Buildings noticeable settlement occurred between 1971-5 during and

immediately following the construction of Carruca House and the Housing Corporation Building which were adjacent to the site. As well Cathedral Square was remodelled during the period. This resulted in increased traffic flow past the north and west facades. Christchurch Transport Board buses based behind the building travelled round the whole perimeter of Government Buildings and this activity may have contributed to some settlement.

By January 1980 considerable cracking in the southwest corner, and a diagonal shear crack in a brick column had developed. These were investigated by removal of the decorative plaster coat and a contract worth \$19,473 was let to Fletcher Development and Construction Limited. This contract for strengthening works involved fixing a series of steel ties up the exterior face of the building and at roof level to tie the brickwork together. Two brick columns were also replaced by spaced steel columns. The contract was completed by late August, 1980. Staff from the west end of Government Buildings were placed in alternative accommodation during the time of the contract but the second floor area has not been re-occupied since then.

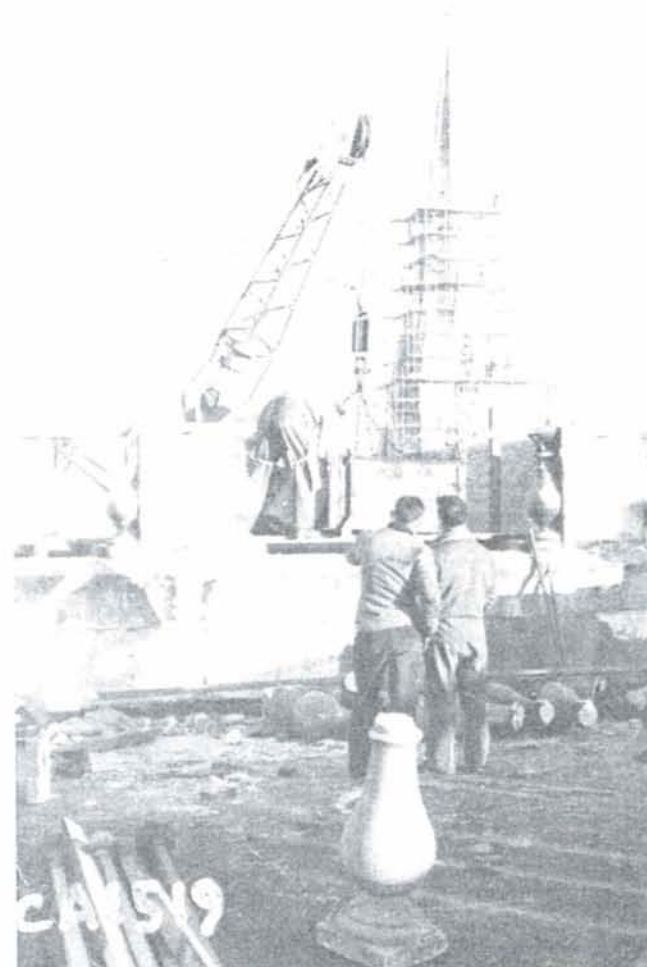


Ministry of Works and Development



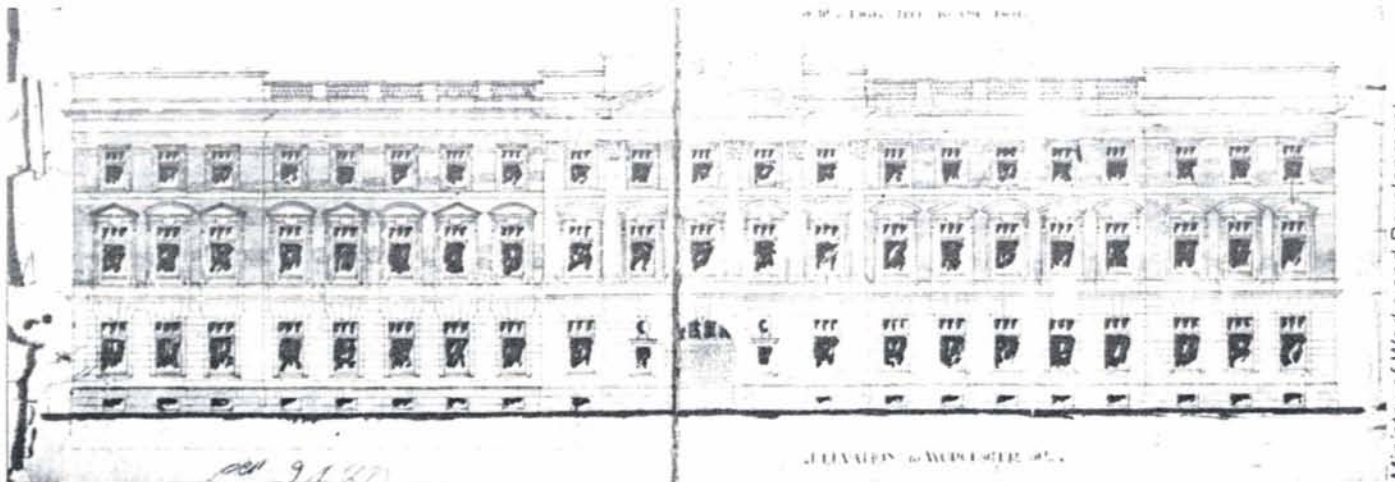
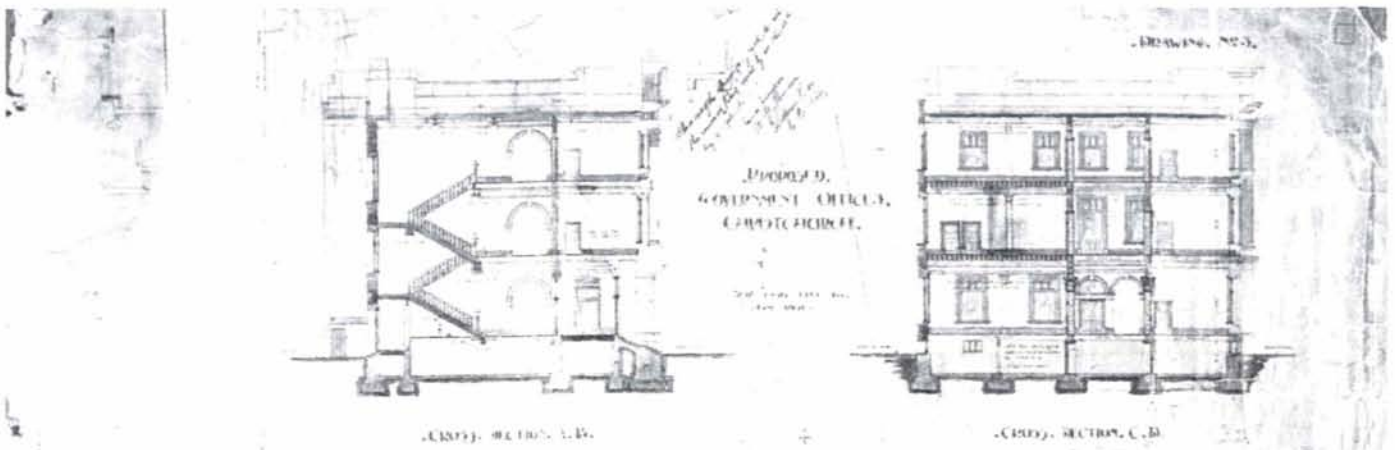
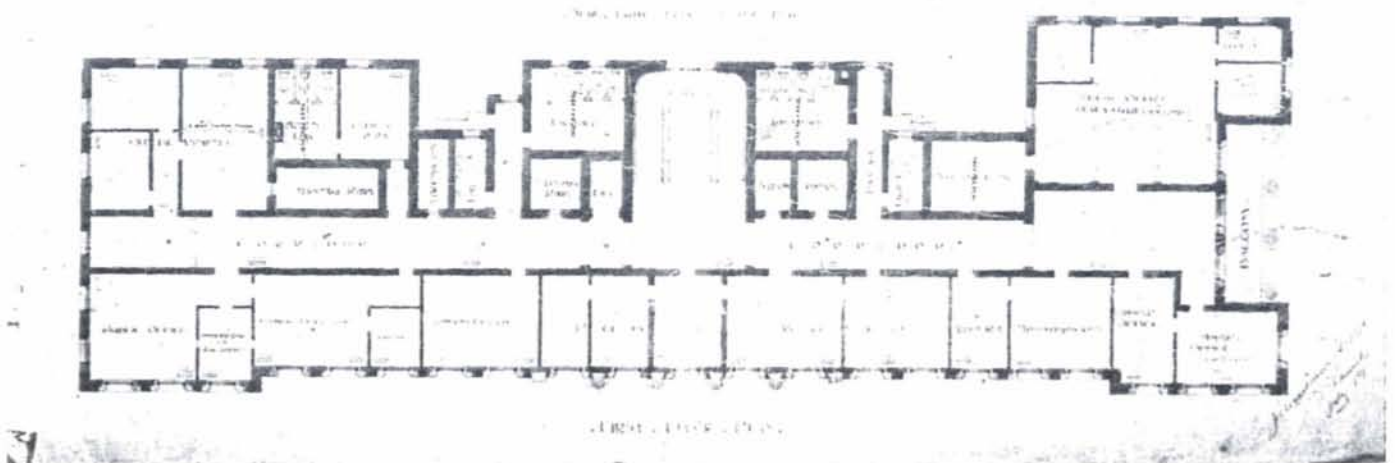
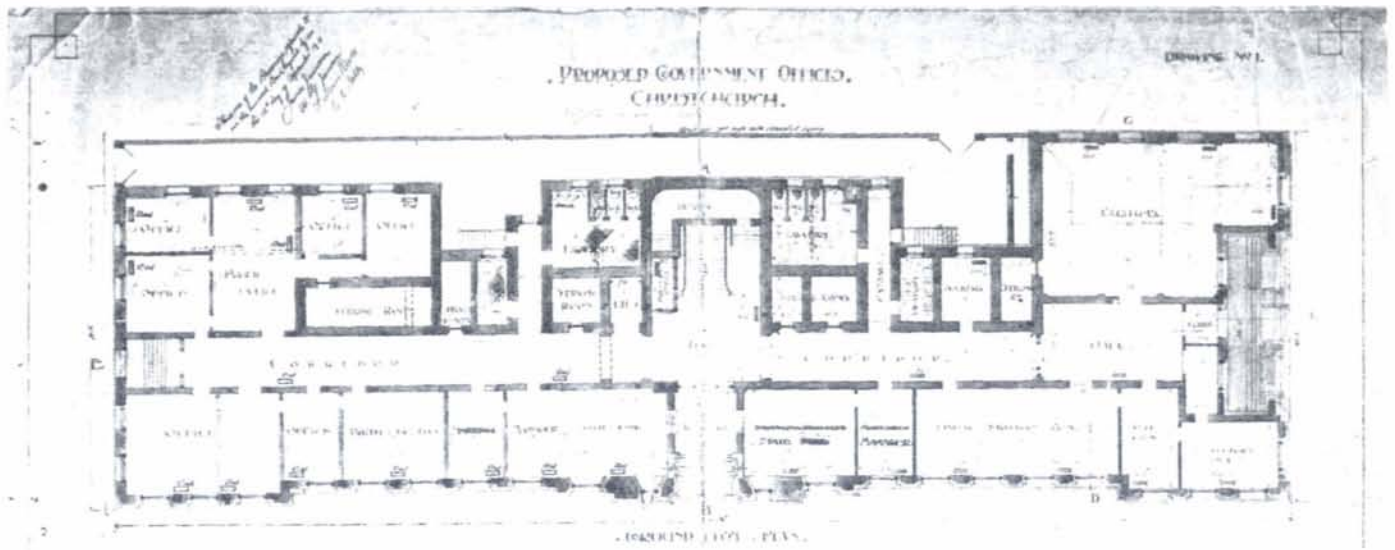
Ministry of Works and Development

Replacing parapets, 1960



Ministry of Works and Development







# The style of the Government Buildings

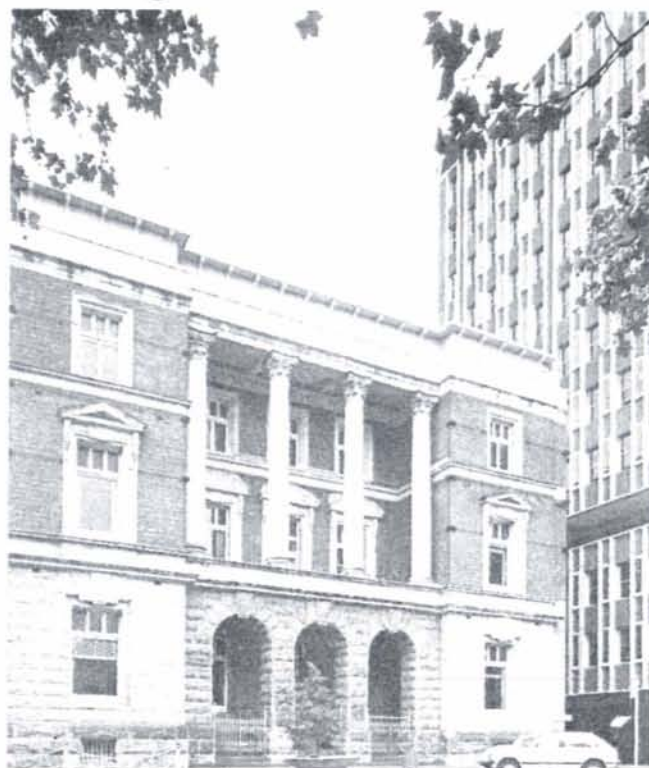
The Government Buildings were designed by Maddison in the style of an Italian High Renaissance palazzo.<sup>29</sup> Classical styles were often adopted for official buildings built in New Zealand in the late Victorian and early Edwardian years. The restrained classicism of Maddison's design projects an impression of authority and signifies the power of the State.



Canterbury Museum

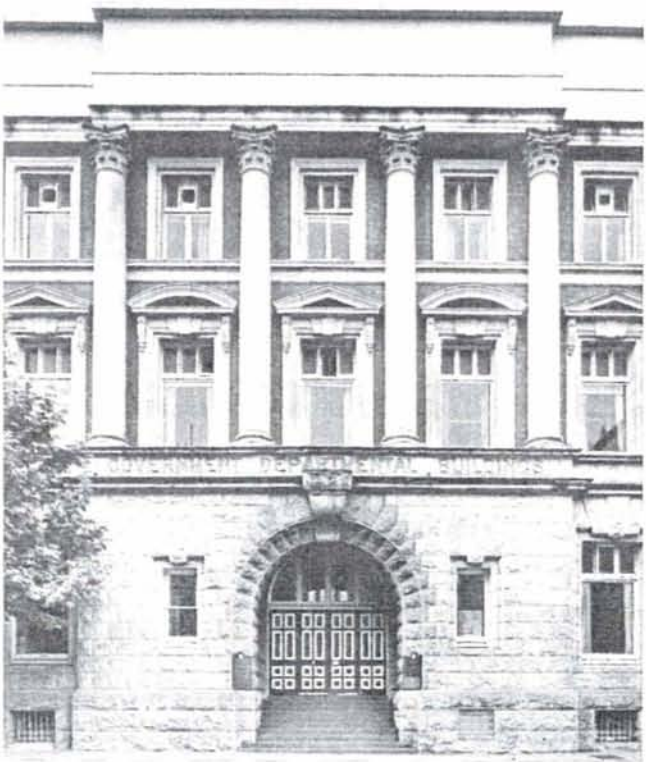
Clarendon Hotel, 1903

On the street frontage smooth red brick walls rise above a heavily rusticated stone base. Windows with alternating triangular and segmental pediments punctuate the north and west facades on the first floor, and square-headed windows feature on the upper level. A portico *in antis* rises above the entrance on the west front of the building. On the north facade, the main entrance is marked by a slight projection with high Tuscan columns flanked by pilasters supporting a pediment. The building originally culminated in a balustrade but this was replaced in 1960 with a plain reinforced concrete parapet with plastered faces. This change has had the unfortunate effect of disrupting the building's proportions, the weight of the present parapet giving it a somewhat ponderous look.



Internally, the building has been modified over the years by subdivision and installation of lowered ceilings in some areas. However, the architectural "feel" of the internal spaces designed by Maddison is still evident. It is a rare quality today in a public building to have the generous volumes, proportions and classical ornamentation still present in the Government Buildings.

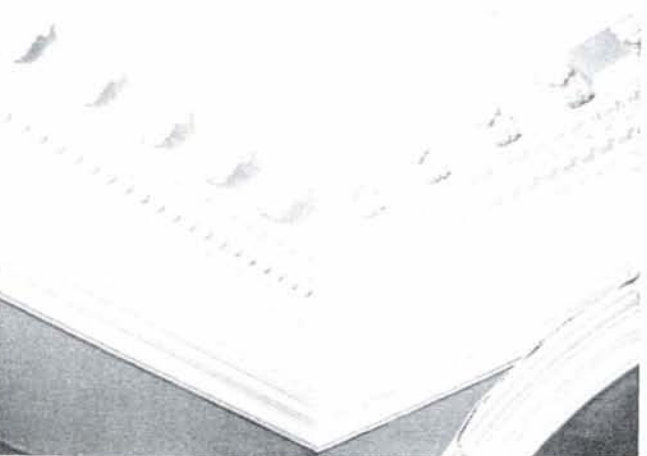
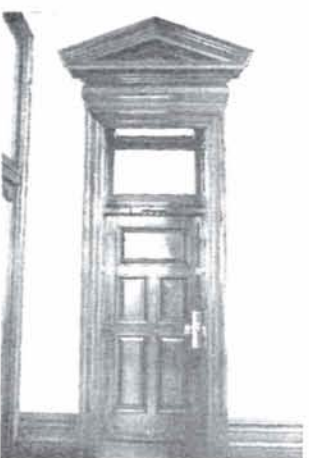
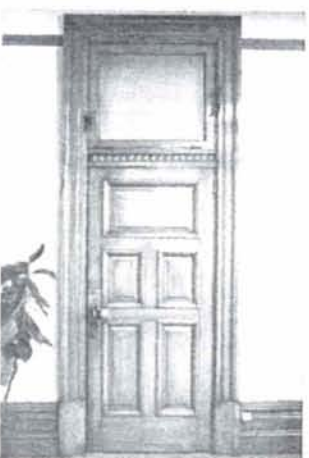
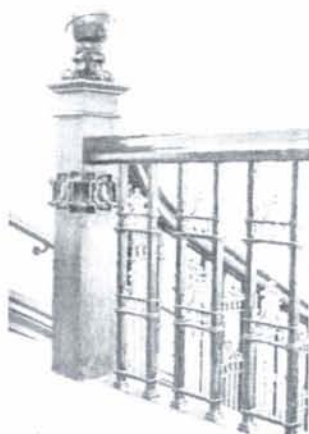
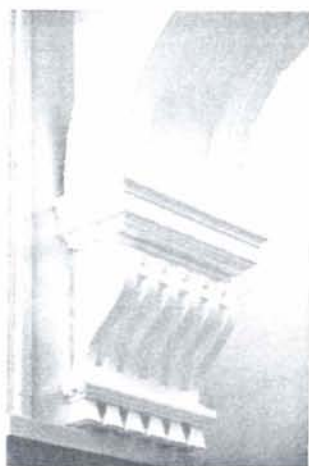
The interior of the Government Buildings impresses first of all through its expansive scale, with long corridors opening from either side of the large central stair well. The staircase is the major architectural feature of the interior and rises through the full height of the building. Although the overall



Ministry of Works and Development

<sup>29</sup>The design has some resemblance to his design for the Clarendon Hotel, Oxford Terrace which has been described as a Renaissance palazzo on a small scale.





treatment of the stair is simple, decorative interest is provided by the newel posts and the iron balusters which support the wooden stair rail. The staircase is lit by large windows on the south wall at both first and second floor levels.



Ministry of Works and Development

From either side of the central stair well round arches lead to the corridors which provide access to the office space. The most interesting feature of the main ground floor corridor is the sequence of tall timber doorcases surmounted by triangular pediments. The pediments rise almost to the level of the plaster opening which forms the transition between the wall and ceiling. The elongated form of the doorcases results from the inclusion of fan lights above the doors in order to allow some natural light to reach the corridors. Although these corridors have little spatial impact the generous scale and cleanliness of the doorcases creates an air of dignity and restraint.

The plaster mouldings of the corridors and stairwell are made up of the standard classical elements of acanthus leaves, dentils and the egg and dart motif. The mouldings of the subsidiary spaces are smaller in scale and simpler in form. Ceilings are left plain except for the plaster "roses" which adorn the centre of each bay. These have now been largely obscured by the installation of modern lighting units.

One feature of the interior which it is easy to overlook is the entrance vestibule, the walls of which are lined with glazed white tiles. On either side of the vestibule are doorways identical to those of the main corridor, except that the pedimented doorcases have been executed in white ceramics to match the wall surfaces.

Throughout the interior of the Government Buildings it is the principal public spaces which have been given the most elaborate decorative treatment. The ground floor is thus more richly embellished than the upper floors while the main east-west corridor is more imposing than the secondary north-south corridors. Maddison has in fact followed the same principal in designing the interior of the Government Buildings as that which led him to give the main street elevations an imposing decorative treatment while leaving the south side of the building unadorned.

An interesting feature of the building is the stained glass windows which dominate the central stair-case landings on the south wall.<sup>30</sup> The two identical three-light windows are composed mostly of lead-light quarries with a portion of painted and fired stained glass in each light.

A modified version of the Royal Arms of the United Kingdom is shown in the central lights. This comprises a central, quartered shield made up of the historic arms of England (twice), Ireland and Scotland, which is surmounted by a king's helmet and the crest of a crowned lion standing upon the Imperial State Crown of Great Britain. Surrounding the shield is the emblem of the Order of the Garter inscribed with the Old French motto associated with it — HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE ("Evil to him who evil thinks").

<sup>30</sup>Analysis of these windows is based on research by Fiona Ciarán, *New Zealand Stained Glass Research*.

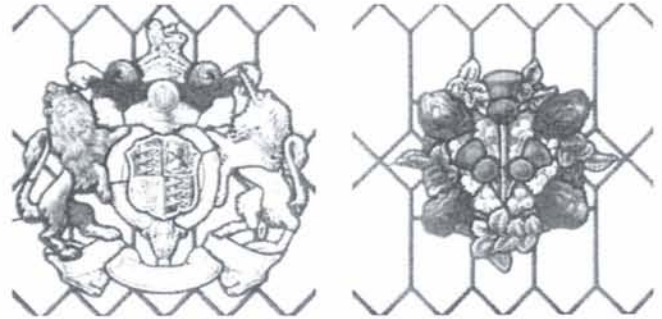




The shield is supported by a crowned lion representing England and the chained unicorn of Scotland with a crown around its neck. At the base the banderole bears the French inscription — DIEU ET MON DROIT ("God and my right").<sup>31</sup>

In the left and right lights of each window are identical floral wreaths made up of roses denoting England, shamrocks for Northern Ireland the thistles for Scotland. No allusion has been made to the country of Wales in these windows.

Although visibly unsigned, these windows are almost certainly the work of Christchurch glass artist Frederick



Mash (1867–1955). Stylistic and technical features such as the treatment of the foliage and application of silver stain are consistent with those in other works of his; for example the heraldic and symbolic, painted and fired, stained glass windows in the Sign of the Takahe on Cashmere Hills.

Born and trained in England, Mash was brought to New Zealand in 1912 by Mr Briton Smith, the then managing director of Smith and Smith Ltd. Mash was to work for that firm's branch in Christchurch designing and painting windows for nearly thirty-five years. He is one of the major, early contributors to the development of painted and fired, stained glass in New Zealand.

Mash was very accomplished at glass painting, staining, firing and acid etching. Many of his windows including these at the Government Buildings reveal extremely fine, detailed work.

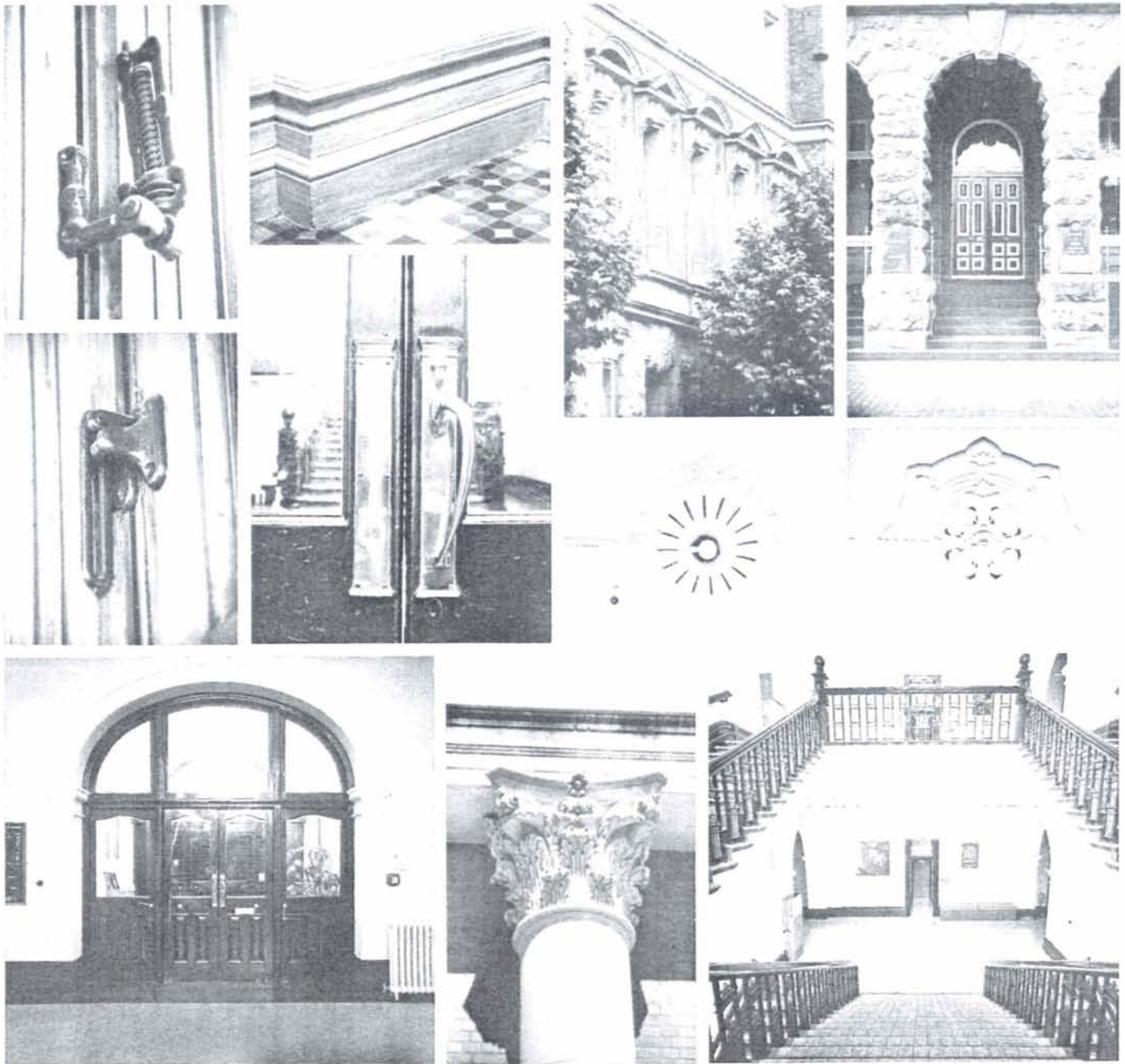
A search of archives has not yet yielded a precise date for the windows but it is possible that they are contemporary with the Buildings' opening. Although a coat of arms was granted to New Zealand in 1911, no representation of it in stained glass appears to have been installed in the Government Buildings to complement the existing windows.



The Government Buildings, 1956

<sup>31</sup>A full technical description of a coat of arms is called a 'blazon' and it is interesting to compare the differences between the version seen in the Government Buildings and a strictly correct blazon of the Royal Arms of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.





## Conclusion

The Government Buildings were built to cater for expansion in the public service, and to provide a better standard of accommodation for Government Departments in Christchurch. The present uncertainty over its future is derived from similar factors. It is now unable to meet the office needs of one large Government Department, the staff of which have worked in cramped conditions. Soon it will be vacated in favour of a new, much larger, Departmental building. Maddison's building remains much as he designed it, and provides an eloquent reminder of a public building style which today is rare. Its prime site makes it vulnerable to redevelopment yet the building offers many possibilities for re-use. A fair assessment of the building confirms that

"As a workplace and major public facility for seven decades, Government Buildings has an important place in citizens memory: a good building to work in, and visually embodying firmness and delight. This building is usually spoken of with understanding of its defects and inefficiencies, but also with a recognizable fondness. Those who know Government Buildings well see its shortcomings yet vouch for its worth."<sup>32</sup>



Proposed Christchurch Government Centre

<sup>32</sup>Ministry of Works and Development 1983, *Preliminary Assessment Report*



# Glossary

<b>Balustrade</b>	A series of short posts or pillars supporting a rail.	<b>Pediment</b>	A low pitched gable above a portico
<b>Classicism</b>	A revival or return to the principles of Greek or Roman art and architecture.	<b>Pilasters</b>	A shallow pier or rectangular column projecting only slightly from a wall.
<b>High Renaissance</b>	A style of architecture based on Italian forms developed around 1500. It is a variant of the Renaissance style which dominated from c.1420 to c.1550.	<b>Portico</b>	A roofed space, open or partly enclosed, forming the entrance and centre-piece of the facade of a building.
<b>In Antis</b>	Used to describe a portico receding into a building with columns in line with the front wall, as opposed to the portico projecting from a building.	<b>Tuscan</b>	A mode of decoration for columns derived from the Etruscan type temple.
<b>Parapet</b>	A low wall, sometimes battlemented, placed to protect any spot where there is a sudden drop, eg at roof edges.		

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