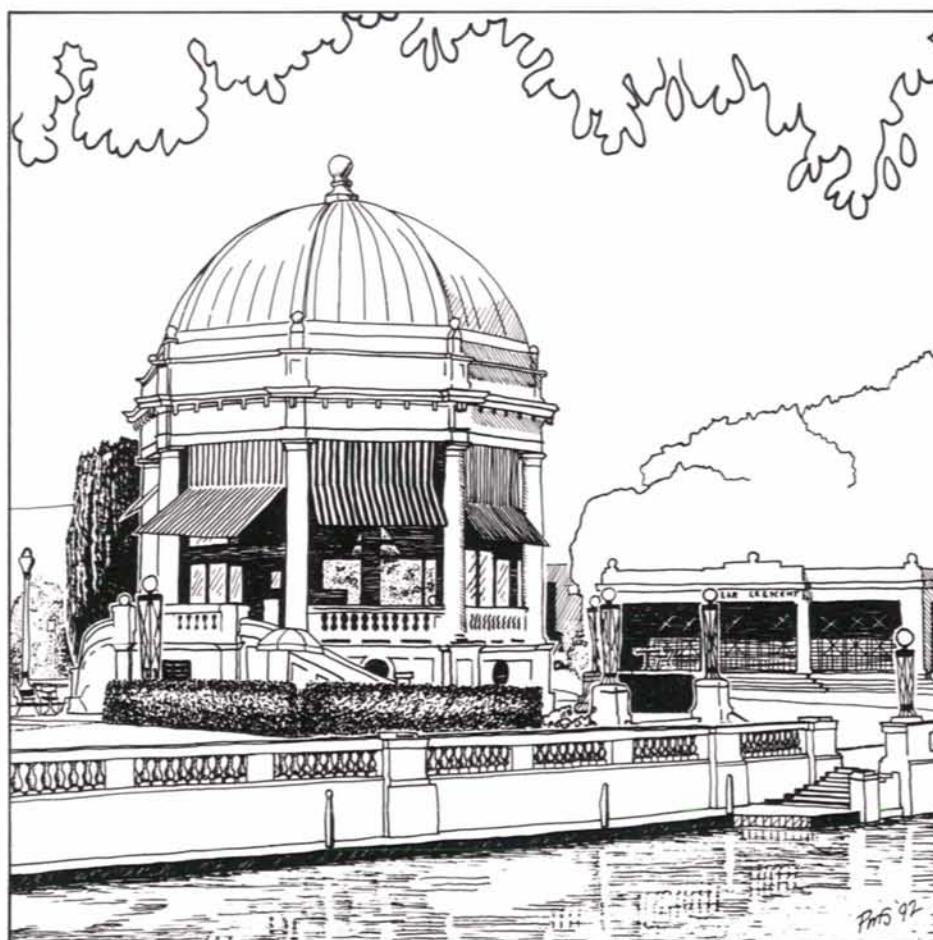


# THE ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE OF CHRISTCHURCH

## 8. The legacy of Thomas Edmonds





## Preface

Christchurch has a charm that depends to a large extent on features built or planned by people. 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 Schemes list over 400 historic buildings and objects. Although the scheme encourages their preservation, in the end only the determination of the community can effectively protect or revitalize 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.

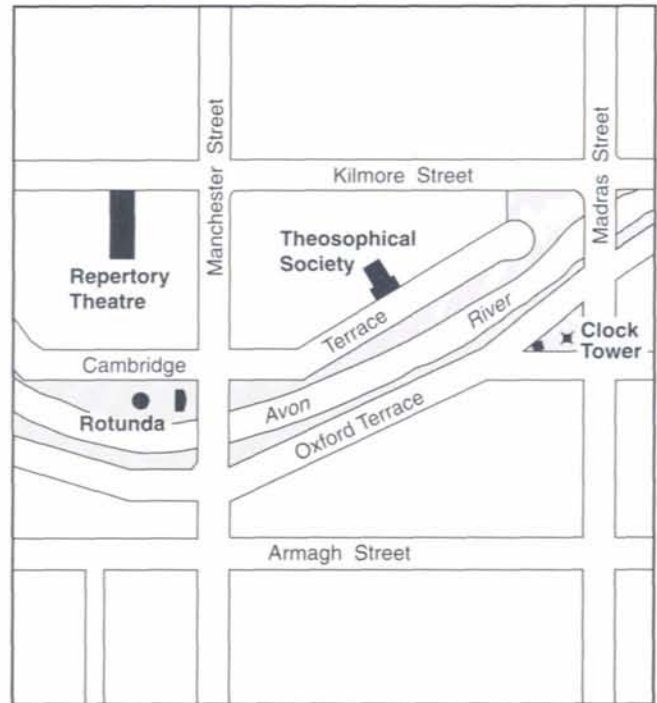
If these booklets encourage you to think about the historic significance of this city's architecture, and help you to recognize the special value of Christchurch's historic buildings, then they will have served their purpose.

# The Legacy of Thomas Edmonds

## Introduction

Thomas Edmonds contributed significantly to the architectural history of Christchurch after the founding of the Edmonds Factory and Gardens in Ferry Road. The many buildings he substantially funded or donated to the city include: the Theosophical Society building in Cambridge Terrace, the Radiant Hall (now the Repertory Theatre) in Kilmore Street, the Band rotunda (now the Thomas Edmonds Restaurant) in Cambridge Terrace, the clock tower and telephone cabinet in Oxford Terrace, 16 lighting standards along Cambridge Terrace, and Bickerton Park on the corner of Wainoni Road and Avonside Drive in memory of his friend Professor Bickerton. Thomas Edmonds' prolific donations were a result of his 50 years of business in Christchurch.

The Edmonds' Factory was demolished amid controversy in October 1990. The factory and surrounding gardens were well known throughout Australasia as they were featured on the cover of the popular Edmonds' Cookbook. Apart from the demolition of the factory, Edmonds' legacy to Christchurch has otherwise survived. It is the intention of this booklet to outline the architectural and historical significance of the buildings Thomas Edmonds was involved with and to acknowledge his substantial contribution to the city of Christchurch.



## Thomas J. Edmonds 1858-1932

Thomas John Edmonds was born in Poplar, London on 13 October 1858. He was the son of James Darley Edmonds of Wales and Jane Elizabeth Edmonds (née Darley) of Yorkshire, England. He married Jane Elizabeth Middleton Irvine of London on 8 June 1879 and they both arrived in Lyttelton on the *Waitangi* on 26 September 1879.

Before leaving for New Zealand, Edmonds worked for Allen and Sons, one of the largest confectionary firms in England. It was here that he gained experience in the mixing of powders which he put to good use in the making of what was to become his famous "Sure to Rise" baking powder.

Thomas and Jane Edmonds originally owned a grocery shop on the south-west corner of what is now Edmond and Randolph Streets in Woolston. Edmonds soon found there



The original shop, corner Edmond and Randolph Streets

Through The Changing Years



T.J. Edmonds

Ray Edmonds

was a need for a reliable brand of baking powder and he devoted his energies to experimenting, whilst Jane managed the shop. When he was confident in marketing his baking powder he delivered samples around the neighbourhood and would ask his customers to try the powder and, if satisfied, they could pay him on his return.<sup>1</sup>

From these humble beginnings, Edmonds spent more than three years perfecting his product and soon established a steady market despite the appearance of rival brands.

<sup>1</sup> Interview 12 April, 1991 Beatrice Jauncey (née Edmonds).

In the early 1890s they moved to a house on the corner of Aldwins and Ferry Roads. It was here that Thomas built sheds to manufacture baking powder on a larger scale, and this was eventually the site of the three-storeyed factory with its distinctive "Sure to Rise" sign and much-admired gardens. These became a famous landmark in Christchurch and throughout Australasia.

In 1901 Thomas and Jane bought land at 203 Worcester Street where they built their new family home. They had eight children and three of their sons, Thomas, George and James and a son-in-law, Albert Cropp, went into the business. The youngest daughter Irene (Ballantyne) became a well-known concert violinist. Edmonds was fond of organ music and he and Jane gave musical evenings at home where the family and guests would play the piano, violin and organ.<sup>2</sup> An organola (version of a pianola) was imported from America by Edmonds and the family believe that it was eventually donated to a Baptist church in Colombo Street, but unfortunately the organola cannot be traced.

Edmonds had a great interest in plants and this resulted in the establishment of the Edmonds Factory Garden, one of the first factory gardens in New Zealand. He imported many varieties of tropical plants to grow in his hothouses which were open to the public. Edmonds many other interests included astronomy, philosophy and technology.

Thomas Edmonds was an astute businessman, aware that advertising was an important factor in promoting sales. He also proved himself to be a benevolent employer, ensuring that the working conditions for his employees were maintained to a high standard and often providing finance for their mortgages.<sup>3</sup>

Thomas and Jane Edmonds were philanthropists and supported organisations such as the Red Cross and Plunket Societies, St Saviour's Orphanage, The Salvation Army,



Jane Edmonds

Ken Ballantyne

Rotary Club and the Y.M.C.A. To mark their fifty years of residence in Christchurch, they donated the band rotunda, shelter, lighting standards, clock tower and telephone cabinet to the city.

In later years, Thomas and Jane lived briefly in Los Angeles and Sydney before returning to Christchurch where Thomas Edmonds died of peritonitis on Thursday 2nd June 1932, aged 74 years. He was buried at the Linwood Cemetery where a fitting tribute was read to the great assembly of mourners by the Mayor, D. G. Sullivan,

The death of Mr Edmonds removes from our midst one of the most philanthropic citizens we have known.<sup>4</sup>

Jane Edmonds became increasingly unsettled after Thomas died as she found it hard to accept that he had died before her. In 1933 she moved to Wellington where she died in 1938, aged 79, after being struck by a vehicle.



The Edmonds family c.1903

Ray Edmonds

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Interview 15 February 1991, Mrs Doris Basher, whose husband worked for approximately 20 years at the Edmonds Factory.

<sup>4</sup> *The Press*, 6 June, 1932.



Canterbury Museum

The new factory building c.1923

## T. J. Edmonds' Factory Building

From small beginnings in the Randolph Street shop, the sale of Edmonds' baking powder steadily increased, and in 1912 over one million tins were sold.<sup>5</sup> The wooden sheds which Edmonds had built in Ferry Road were enlarged to cope with the ever increasing demand and in 1920 work began on the new factory building.

Built between 1920-23, the three storeyed rectangular building was built in brick with a cement plaster façade. The building was divided into six bays defined by saw-tooth roofing which was a functional element in roof design to

catch maximum sunlight. An example of a similar brick structure with saw-tooth roofing can be seen in the Pyne Gould Guinness building in Moorhouse Avenue .

Thomas Edmonds' jubilee booklet *Through the Changing Years* described the new factory as "a three-storeyed, scientifically constructed building admitting the maximum amount of light and air. The most modern machinery is housed there and is electrically controlled, so that dust and smoke are eliminated."



Ken Ballantyne

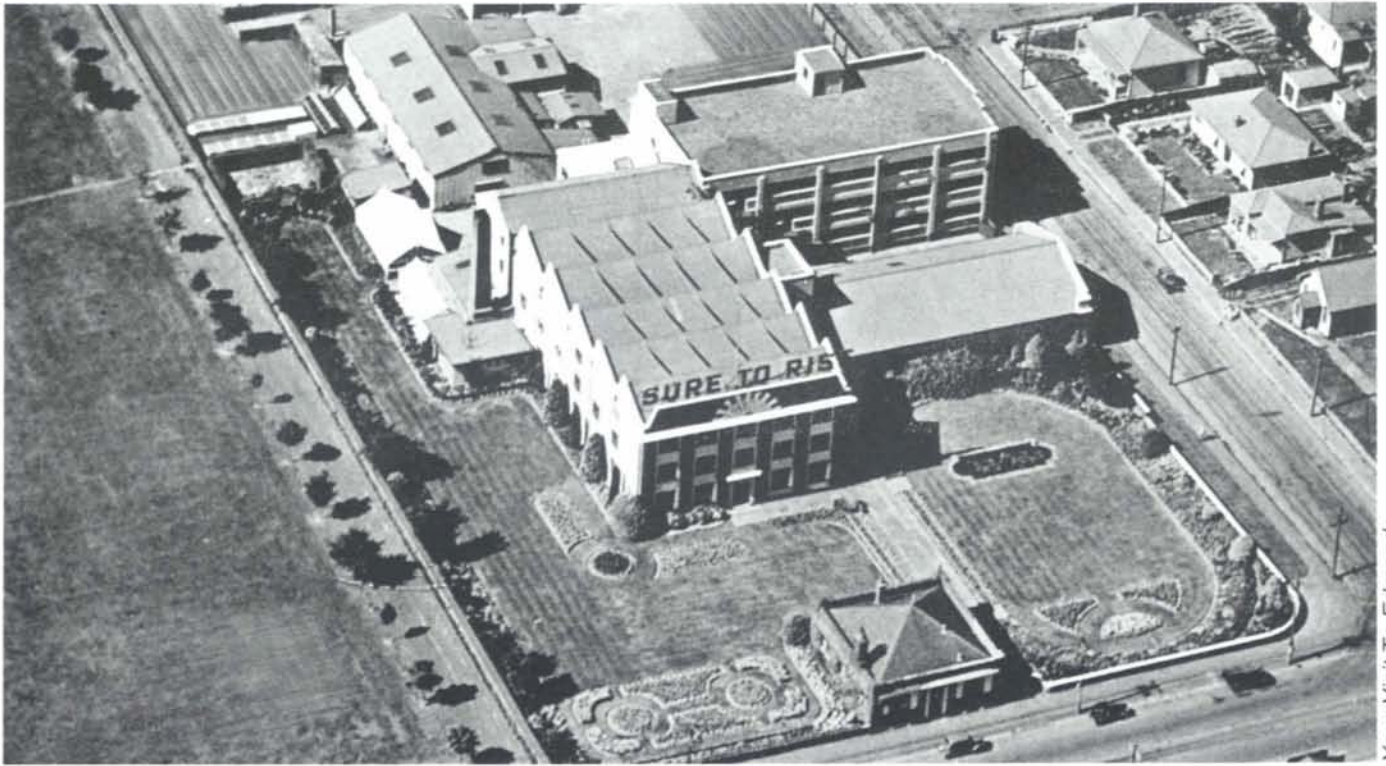
T.J. Edmonds in one of the early wooden buildings



Ray Edmonds

Interior of the factory, c.1925

<sup>5</sup> *Through the Changing Years*, Whitcombe and Tombs, 1929.



*Aerial view of the factory and gardens*

Your Visit To Edmonds

## The architects

J. S. and M. J. Guthrie were brothers who worked as architects, both independently and in partnership .

The Guthrie brothers designed many residences in Canterbury, perhaps the best known being "Los Angeles" at 110 Fendalton Road, completed in 1913. The Guthrie brothers were versatile architects and also designed commercial buildings, churches, hotels and schools. Their better known works include Christchurch Boys High School in Straven Road and St George's Hospital in Papanui Road.

Jack Guthrie was one of the first architects to introduce the American Colonial style of housing to Christchurch, and possibly New Zealand, with his 1917 design for "The Long Cottage" at 157 Papanui Road.



*Boys' High School, Riccarton, Christchurch, N.Z.*

Canterbury Museum

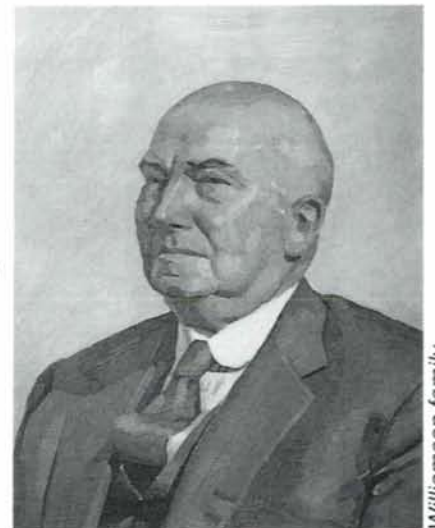
## The builder

William Henry Williamson was born in Christchurch in 1887. His father and grandfather were both builders and at the age of 17 and still an apprentice carpenter, he gained his first contract to build some shops in Christchurch. Williamson's offices and work yard are still standing at 183 Montreal Street.

His main works fell into three categories: hydro-electric stations; theatres, which included the De Luxe in Wellington (one of his first major works), and the Avon in Christchurch; and freezing works in Kaiapoi and throughout New Zealand. Other building contracts included hospitals, bridges and hotels.

Williamson's last major contracts included the South Pacific Hotel in Auckland and the science block at the University of Canterbury. His favourite building was the Christchurch Hospital Nurses' Memorial Chapel which he built in 1927-28.<sup>6</sup>

*William Williamson*



Williamson family

<sup>6</sup> This was the subject of the 7th booklet in this series, published in 1990.

Williamson served a term on the Christchurch City Council during the depression of the 1930s and also on the Tramway Board. Williamson was a Justice of the Peace, a past President of the Master Builders & Joiners Association, and a fellow of the Institute of Builders, London, and the

Institute of Building, Australia.

Williamson's son Peter carried on the business which ceased in the late 1980s. William Williamson died in Christchurch in December 1971.<sup>7</sup>

## The style of the factory

The primary objective of the Guthrie brothers was to produce a functional design for Thomas Edmonds' new factory. The main architectural feature was the imposing façade with its surmounting "Sure to Rise" sign.

Thomas Edmonds' choice of the "Sure To Rise" sunray motif reinforced the reliability of his baking powder. Edmonds was also interested in the therapeutic qualities of the sun which were being promoted during the 1920s and 1930s and the Radiant Health Club resulted from this interest. The sunray motif became popular during the Art Deco period and was incorporated not only as an architectural feature, but also in fashion and interior design.<sup>8</sup>



The cover of the 3rd edition cookery book, c. 1914.

## T. J. Edmonds' Factory Gardens

The 'Garden City Movement' arose in Britain as a response to the social problems which accompanied nineteenth century industrialization. Associated ideas that philanthropic factory owners should provide recreation facilities for their workers, and beautify the surroundings of their factories found expression in New Zealand in the early twentieth century.

The Edmonds Factory Garden, being one of the first, was influential in the development of factory gardens throughout the city. It is a representative example of a distinctly 'Christchurch style' of gardening, typified by bright floral displays and 'velvet' lawns. The Factory Garden competitions held by the Christchurch Beautifying Society and Horticultural Society were keenly contested by the professional gardeners employed by the factories.

Rupert Overend was employed as head gardener and he was responsible for the initial layout of the Edmonds Factory Gardens.<sup>9</sup> This took the form of geometrically shaped flower beds set into the lawn. The colourful annual bedding displays were also part of the overall formal garden design which eventually included long borders along the west and east boundaries of the factory. Progressive purchases of land extended the garden and by 1929 the shape of the flowerbeds had become more rounded. The first glasshouse was built at this time, just west of the factory, to house T J Edmonds' tropical plant collection.

In 1931 Malcolm Gilpin was appointed head gardener and in 1935 he made preparations for a new garden, designed by Edgar Taylor, Christchurch's first landscape architect. The neo-classical garden featured an ornamental pergola and a lily pond. A raised semi-circular bed planted out in French marigolds in the form of Edmonds' sunray motif was added after 1940.



The garden progressively moved west, with the pond and creek in the present garden formed between 1977 and 1982 by the head gardener, Ray Leech.

The gardens immediately in front of the factory were destroyed in October 1990 with the demolition of the factory. However the area of garden west of the former factory has been purchased by the Christchurch City Council and The Friends of The Edmonds Factory Gardens plan to restore it to its former state. In July 1992, Bluebird Foods Ltd donated the money required for a re-creation of Edgar Taylor's oval garden, to be known as "The Bluebird Garden" when completed. There are also plans for a reconstruction of the Rose Garden. Adjacent to the gardens is Edmonds Park which was donated to the city by T. J. Edmonds Ltd in 1945. The park was originally part of the factory site and is now used primarily as playing fields for Linwood High School.

<sup>7</sup> *The Press*, obituary, 3 December 1971, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> Hillier, 1971, p.42. Sun-worship was part of the cultures of Ancient Egypt and Ancient Peru, both of which were influential on Art Deco.

<sup>9</sup> Strongman, 1991, pp4-9. Overend originally worked in the factory and was known to be a keen amateur gardener.



## Theosophical Society Building

The Theosophical Society was founded in New York by Madame H. P. Blavatsky in 1875. Theosophy means "divine wisdom" and its three fundamental objectives are:

- 1) To form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour;
- 2) To encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy and science;
- 3) To investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man.

The Christchurch Lodge of the Society was founded on 28 June 1894 and public lectures were held regularly to promote its ideals. Thomas and Jane Edmonds were sympathetic to the Theosophical Society's teachings and often attended the meetings accompanied by daughter Beatrice, who continued to take a strong interest in Theosophy over the years.<sup>10</sup>

On 18 March 1925 a sub-committee was formed during a meeting of the Christchurch Lodge to consider plans for a

new building. A site in Cambridge Terrace had already been selected and it was decided at a later meeting on 16 July 1925 that fund raising would take the form of £2,000 to be raised by public appeal and £2,000 by loan. Edmonds was listed as one of the likely subscribers to the building project, although he had not been formally introduced by way of membership to the Society.

The total estimated cost of the finished hall, including heating and furnishings, and the architect Cecil Wood's fee, came to £5,000. Edmonds was advised of the costs and requested to see the plan before subscribing.<sup>11</sup> He was also informed that £500 was required for the purchase of the new site by 1st September 1925. Edmonds promised to give £250 and lend the balance at 5% interest.<sup>12</sup>

D. Scott & Son were chosen as the building contractors after submitting their estimate of £4,200. Edmonds agreed to advance £2,500 from the 1st August 1926 at 6½% interest, 1½% of which was to be an annual donation to the Building Fund until the advance was repaid.<sup>13</sup>

## The architect

Cecil W. Wood was born in Christchurch on 6 June 1878. At the age of 15 years, Wood began work in the office of F. W. Strouts, who designed many prominent homes, such as "Elmwood" and Sir Heaton Rhodes' "Otahuna", and he later worked for Clarkson and Ballantyne.<sup>14</sup> Between 1901-1906 Wood worked in England with Leonard Stokes and Robert

Weir Schultz and also for the London County Council. Wood came into contact with the Neo-Georgian domestic revival style while in England, no doubt influenced by Leonard Stokes who was considered an important architect who had links to the Arts and Crafts Movement during that time.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Archival records of the Canterbury branch of the Theosophical Society.

<sup>11</sup> 9 August 1925, minutes of meeting, Christchurch Lodge.

<sup>12</sup> 30 August 1925, minutes of meeting, Christchurch Lodge.

<sup>13</sup> 1 February 1926, minutes of meeting, Christchurch Lodge. Edmonds

agreed that the advance should be repaid at any time within five years.

<sup>14</sup> McLintock, 1966, p. 680.

<sup>15</sup> Cattell, 1984, p. 9. Wood was also the nephew of Richard Norman Shaw, the pre-eminent Arts and Crafts architect of the 19th century.



On his return from England, Wood became a partner in Hurst Seager and Wood, (later Hurst Seager, Wood & Munnings), and later began his own practice. He married Iris Bruce in 1909 and although Iris was a sometime president of the Plunket Society they did not have any children. Wood's earlier work was largely domestic, but eventually his practice developed over a wide field and he was considered one of Canterbury's most important architects during the years between the World Wars.<sup>16</sup>

His best known example of school architecture, and possibly his finest work, is the Christ's College Memorial Dining Hall in Rolleston Avenue. Officially opened on 30 November 1922, (although not completed until 1925), the design is influenced by English collegiate buildings and medieval great halls.<sup>17</sup>

One of the best examples of Wood's domestic work in Christchurch is the Neo-Georgian Bishopscourt at 100 Park Terrace, completed in 1927. It was originally built as a

residence for the Anglican Bishop of Christchurch and now forms part of a retirement complex called Bishopspark. The square-headed dormer windows and balcony porches at each end of the garden façade give the building an overall symmetrical appearance.

The majority of Cecil Wood's work was built in Canterbury, however examples can be found in other parts of New Zealand. Wood belonged to the New Zealand Institute of Architects (President 1937-38) and the Royal Institute of British Architects. He was also one of the judges in competitions for the Auckland War Memorial, the Auckland Civic Centre and the National Art Gallery and Museum in Wellington.<sup>18</sup>

Wood was a competent architect in a wide range of traditional styles and his own home, built in the Neo-Georgian style in 1945, is still situated on the corner of Helmore's Lane and Rhodes Street in Christchurch. Cecil Wood died on the 28th November 1947.



Cecil Wood



Home and Building

Part of Cecil Wood's plans for the Theosophical Society

C.C.C. Archives

## The foundation stone

"The unveiling of the foundation stone was performed on Sunday 25 July 1926 at 43 minutes past four in the afternoon. The inscription reads:

*This building is dedicated to the Glory  
of God and Service to Humanity*

The reason for the precise timing, was because this was when Buddha had preached his first sermon at the hour of the full moon."<sup>19</sup>

Bishop Thomson of Auckland unveiled the dedication stone conducting a short service and giving a brief address amidst a large gathering of members. Readings were given by the architect Cecil Wood, the President Miss J. G. Montgomery, Miss E. Hunt and Mr W. S. Pickles. A hymn and the National Anthem were also sung.



## The building

The Theosophical Society building is rectangular in plan with the main building constructed in brick and plaster with a slate hipped roof. The lecture hall at the rear has a corrugated iron roof and was built to only half its intended

size due to lack of funds. The anteroom's roof and external walls are also of corrugated iron. The building has remained unaltered since it was built although there are plans for some internal alterations.

<sup>16</sup> N.Z. Historic Places Trust, p.20.  
<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p.24.

<sup>18</sup> An appreciation of the work of the late Cecil W. Wood, p.13.  
<sup>19</sup> The Press, 26 July 1926.

# The style of the building

Cecil Wood designed the building in the Neo-Georgian style. As the word "theosophy" derives from the Greek words "Theo" and "Sophia" meaning "divine" and "wisdom" respectively, the choice of a classic form was no doubt seen as appropriate when giving reference to the "past glories of Antiquity" thus adding status to the religious purpose of the building.

The street frontage has a centrally-placed portico with Tuscan Doric columns. The sub-committee originally intended to improve the look of the front elevation by adding a parapet, however this was not included as some members did not like the Neo-Georgian style of architecture and complained that it looked too much like a dwelling. A composite form of cornice was used to form the base of the hipped roof.

The multi-paned windows add to the austere character of the building and quoins add extra detail to an otherwise relatively flat surface. Various rooms stem from a central hall including the Lodge Library and a small chapel serving the Liberal Catholic Church. The Theosophical Society had always intended that the Liberal Catholic Church be part of the new building and Edmonds was informed of this before he committed himself to the project.<sup>20</sup> Other sundry rooms on the ground floor include a cloakroom, kitchen and toilet.



*Quoins*

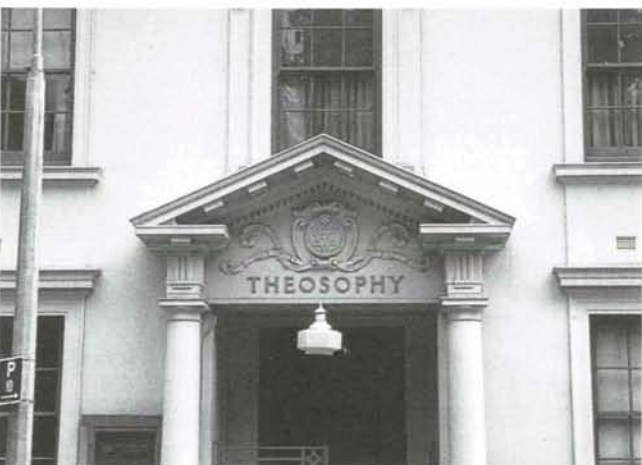
The hall itself is situated at the rear of the building and has seating for approximately 120 people. The interior is relatively plain with a small stage at the northern end and the dark stained timber proscenium and sash window frames contrast with the light wall surfaces. Tuscan style pilasters with sunken panels divide the side walls into three equal bays. The ceiling emphasizes these divisions with supporting beams extending from the capitals of the pilasters.

Edmonds took great interest in the design and execution of the building. He suggested alterations to the plan which included that "the skirting and the stairway bannisters should be plain; that there be one floor level on the ground floor to eliminate the necessity for steps; that there be added a temporary lean-to along the north wall of the building to provide space for the platform and an anteroom."<sup>21</sup>

The upper storey is used by the Christchurch Lodge of Universal Co-Masonry, and the Esoteric Society. The latter was established by Madame Blavatsky, several years after the founding of the Theosophical Society, to assist those members who wished to study Theosophy in more depth.



*The stairway*



*Portico*



*The Lecture hall*

<sup>20</sup> 1 February 1926, minutes of meeting, Christchurch Lodge.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

# Radiant Hall (now the Repertory Theatre)

The early twentieth century brought many changes in the fields of education and health. The Plunket Society was founded in 1907, the Workers' Educational Association (W.E.A.) was founded in Christchurch in 1915, the Social Hygiene Society and the Red Cross (N.Z.) Branch also began in Christchurch in 1916, open air classrooms were in use at Fendalton Primary School by July 1924 and in 1930 the Sunshine League health camps which aimed "to promote national efficiency by improving national health" were being run for children in the South Island.

The First World War provided the impetus for the "middle classes" to take social action. They organized bazaars, patriotic societies and knitting groups, and Jane and Irene Edmonds were actively involved in many of these social activities associated with fundraising for charity. The formation of the Radiant Health Club can therefore be placed within the context of these newly formed organisations.

On 6 June 1929 Thomas Edmonds, along with 14 others, made an application to register the Radiant Health Club as an Incorporated Society. It was to be known as "The Christchurch Radiant Health Club" and some of its objectives were:

- To study and practise Christian Psychology;
- To study and practise Diet;
- To study and practise Solar Plexus Breathing;
- To serve the sick in the community.<sup>22</sup>

The Radiant Health Club had its own badge and all persons over the age of twelve years were eligible for membership. The minimum annual subscription for active members was 2/6d, and a "Love Offering" was received at each meeting to pay for the club's expenses.<sup>23</sup>

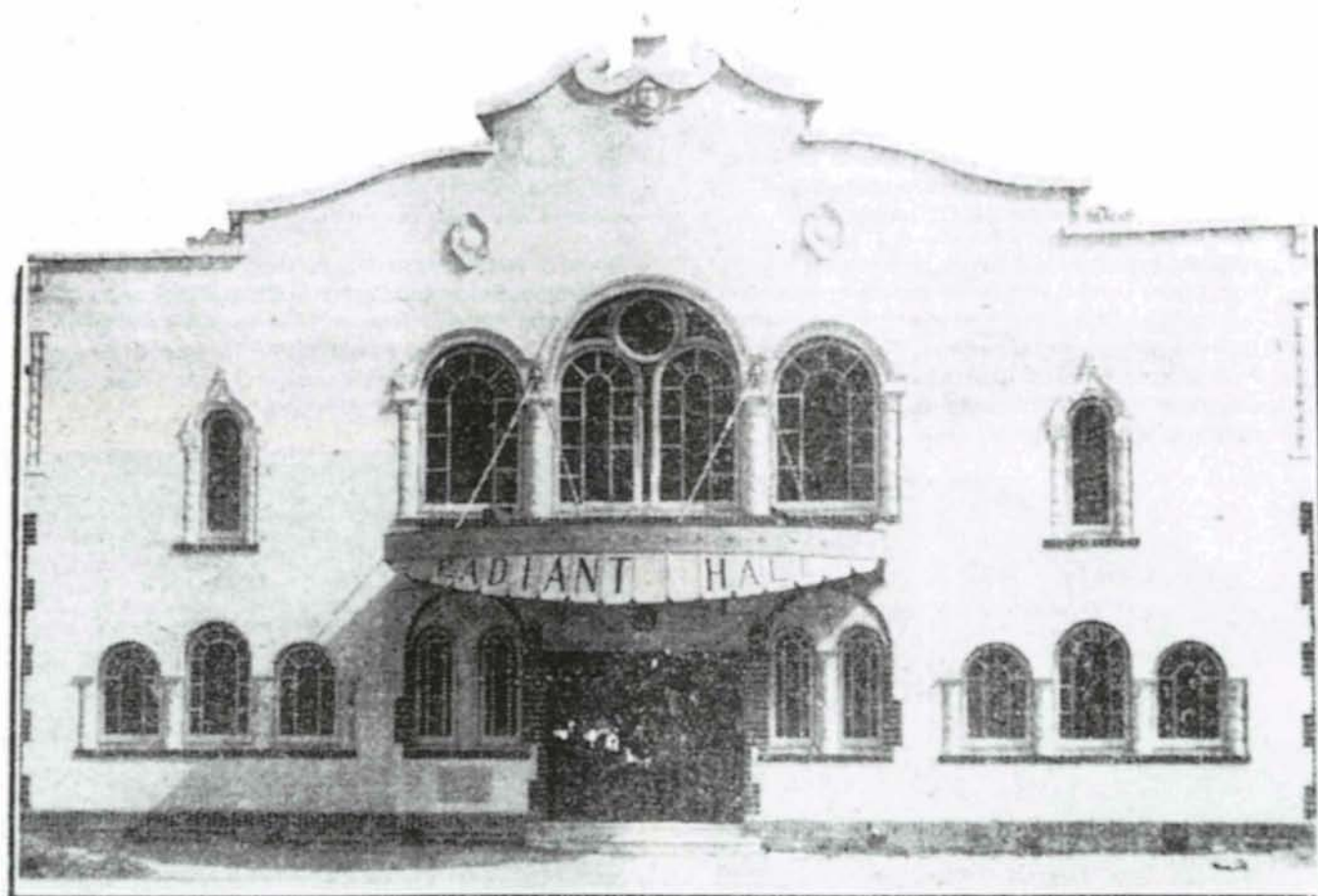
On 14 June 1929 the Radiant Health Club was registered as a company in Christchurch under the name Radiant Hall Limited. The plans for a small hall to service the needs of the Radiant Health Club were soon superseded as the building committee decided on a larger hall.<sup>24</sup>

One of the objectives of Radiant Hall Limited was;

to purchase and/or otherwise acquire the land and premises situated at Kilmore Street, Christchurch aforesaid and being the whole of the land comprised and described in Certificate of Title Volume 364 folio 165 (Christchurch Registry) and to build, construct and erect thereon a hall or theatre and/or any other buildings and to furnish, decorate, work maintain and carry on the same....<sup>25</sup>

Radiant Hall's seven directors included Thomas and Jane Edmonds. The 28 objectives listed under Radiant Hall were quite broad and included:

- "5) To let, lease or hire out the whole or any part of the real and personal property of the Company on such terms as the Directors shall determine....;



<sup>22</sup> From original application and the Club's Rules.

<sup>23</sup> Rules of the Radiant Health Club.

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Edith Ellis, Secretary of the Radiant Health Club to J. M. Morrison, Assistant Registrar of Societies, 14 May 1949.

<sup>25</sup> Memorandum of Association of Radiant Hall Limited, 14 June 1929.

- 8) To carry on at Christchurch aforesaid or elsewhere all or any of the businesses of theatre, music hall, concert hall, or ballroom, song, music, play programme...for public and private amusements and entertainments of every description...which it may appear to the Company desirable to carry on....;
- 16) ...to assist financially and otherwise the poor in the community and generally to promote the welfare of the poor and the relief of sickness and distress by social and spiritual agencies."<sup>26</sup>

The Radiant Health Club eventually disassociated itself from Radiant Hall Ltd because the club felt its needs were not

## The architect

Harry Francis Willis was born in Dunedin on 2 January 1893. His father was a Master Ironfounder in Christchurch. He was educated at Christchurch West District High School (now Hagley Community College) and attended the School of Art (then at Canterbury College). He began his career with Sladden & Palmer, Engineers and Surveyors of New Plymouth before joining the Christchurch City Council as a draughting cadet.

Willis married Esther Mary Blogg (whose father was a building contractor) on 1 April 1916 and they had a son and daughter. Willis went to France in 1916 with the New Zealand Army and upon his return in 1920, he rejoined the City Council and became Assistant City Engineer.<sup>26</sup> C. R. Dawe was City Surveyor and Engineer

In 1922 Willis was admitted to the New Zealand Institute of Architects and in October 1924 he and Dawe resigned from the City Council and began practising in partnership. Willis later commenced business on his own account in 1928. While in partnership, his first major work was the reinstatement of the Civic Theatre in Manchester Street, originally designed by Clarkson and Ballantyne in 1899 and gutted by fire in December 1917. It was re-opened on 17 March 1928 and later demolished in December 1983.

Willis specialized in designing theatres. His interest probably grew from working with Dawe and the construction of the Civic Theatre. During that time attending the cinema became an increasingly popular pastime. The first picture theatre in Christchurch was the Colosseum opened in May 1908 and demolished in 1931 to make way for New Regent Street, which was also designed by Willis.



Civic Theatre

<sup>26</sup> Memorandum of Association of Radiant Hall Limited, 14 June 1929.

<sup>27</sup> Letter from Edith Ellis op. cit.

being met, even though the directors of Radiant Hall Ltd were originally members of the club.<sup>27</sup> From the time of its opening in September 1929, the hall was hired out to the Canterbury Repertory Theatre Society, formed in 1928.

The transfer of the title to Radiant Hall Ltd was completed on 1 July 1929 and the title records Thomas Edmonds as mortgagee. He therefore provided most of the finance towards the hall's construction.

The contract to build the hall was given to Charles Luney, Builder and Contractor of Kilmore Street Christchurch, and work commenced on 27 June 1929.

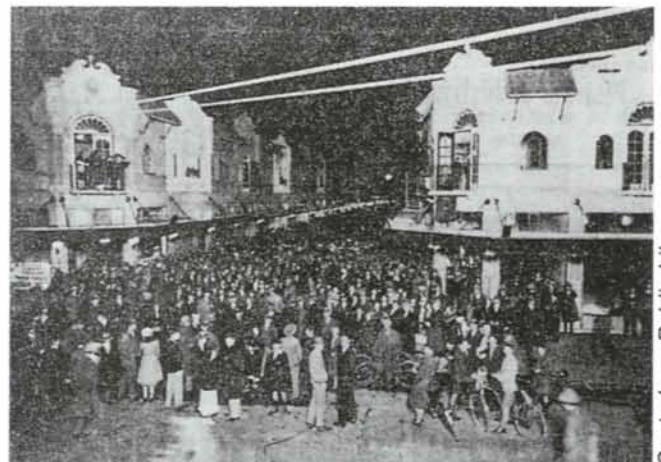
Francis Willis



Gavin Willis

Willis completed a large amount of work for the directors of Amalgamated Theatres, the Noodabe Brothers. During the Depression (1929-1935) the government offered building subsidies on a pound for pound basis, and many buildings including picture theatres were built using this incentive, which is why many picture theatres were called 'State'.

Some of Willis' theatre designs included the State, Cinerama, Savoy and Carlton in Christchurch and the State Theatre in Nelson. Between 1939-43, Willis moved to Auckland to work for Amalgamated Theatres and he also worked for the government and the U.S. Air Force within New Zealand during the war years.



The opening of New Regent Street

Canterbury Public Library

<sup>28</sup> *The Press*, obituary, May 1972. Willis studied engineering by correspondence and also read architecture at St John's College, Cambridge University, during the 1st World War, c.f. interview Gavin Willis.

Towards the end of the war a fire at the Mayfair Theatre (now known as the Cinerama) was the catalyst for Willis' return to Christchurch.

Willis was a versatile and innovative architect<sup>29</sup> designing many commercial buildings, municipal sub-stations, churches, hotels, dwellings and fire stations.

Perhaps his best known work is New Regent Street, designed in the Spanish Mission Style and opened on 1 April 1932. Situated between Gloucester and Armagh

Streets, it consists of a row of two-storey shop buildings encompassing both sides of the street.

As well as their professional relationship of architect and client, Willis and Thomas Edmonds were also personal friends and Edmonds often visited Willis' home in Idris Road in his black electric car. Willis had an office in the T & G Building at 190 Hereford Street<sup>30</sup> where his son Gavin Willis (Willis & Associates) currently practises. Francis Willis retired in 1969 and died in May 1972.

## The builder

Radiant Hall was Charles S. Luney's first major contract and his firm, of which Luney still takes an active part, is presently one of the largest building and contracting firms in Christchurch.

Luney was born in Lyttelton on 28 June 1905 and educated at Christchurch Boys' High School. He was apprenticed to Hardie & Thomson, timber merchants and joinery manufacturers, before founding his own business in 1926. In 1930 Luney married Ena Butler and they had four daughters. Luney's yard is now in Bromley, however his company still has a general store on the site of the original office and yard in Kilmore Street, opposite the Town Hall.<sup>31</sup>

One of Luney's largest contracts was The Princess Margaret Hospital, designed by Manson, Seward & Stanton in 1946 and opened on 31 August 1959. Perhaps his most prestigious contract was the Christchurch Town Hall and Restaurant, designed by Warren & Mahoney in 1965 and opened on 30 September 1972.

Other major contracts include the Reserve Bank, The National Bank and the Government Life Building,<sup>32</sup> all in Christchurch, as well as many freezing works throughout New Zealand. A recent major work was the Park Royal Hotel, constructed as a joint venture with Fletcher Construction who are also working with Luney on the present redevelopment of the Public Hospital.



The Princess Margaret Hospital under construction



T J Edmonds and Charles Luney, 26 September 1929

## The building

Thomas Edmonds unveiled the marble foundation stone on 26 September 1929, some five months after building began. Charles Luney recalls that Thomas Edmonds was extremely interested in the progress of the hall's construction and was in daily attendance at the site during the nine month building period. The foundation stone was removed when the Canterbury Repertory Theatre Society took over the building from Radiant Hall Ltd. on 6 September 1950, possibly to distance itself from any connection with the Radiant Health Club.<sup>33</sup>

The two storeyed Radiant Hall was built in brick with a cement plaster façade and is rectangular in plan. H. Sharman, a skilled plasterer, carried out the external and internal plastering and moulding.

Professor James Shelley<sup>34</sup> was consulted in the design for the stage area which remains largely intact today. The fly gallery<sup>35</sup> at that time, was second in height to the Theatre Royal and backstage facilities included five dressing rooms and a rehearsal room. The main auditorium, including the circle gallery, had seating for approximately 850 people.

The directors of Radiant Hall Ltd decided that "in order to attract a greater number of tenants, the most modern electrical installation would be put in, and that the hall should be electrically heated."<sup>36</sup> However a furnace room was added at the back of the hall and radiators were installed instead of the electric heaters.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Willis' work was influenced by a tour of the Mediterranean with his friend, artist Blythe Fletcher.

<sup>30</sup> In 1956 a fire at Willis' office destroyed all the plans of his work.

<sup>31</sup> Interview 7 June 1991, Charles Luney.

<sup>32</sup> This was the city's first high rise "glass box". The rooftop clock and temperature readings have become a familiar part of the Square.

<sup>33</sup> Interview, Charles Luney, *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Professor Shelley became the first Director of Broadcasting in 1936 and was an important figure in the encouragement of drama and adult education.

<sup>35</sup> The space above the stage used for storing scenery etc.

<sup>36</sup> Report by Radiant Hall Ltd to its shareholders, 19 September 1929.

<sup>37</sup> A fire on 5 July 1938 gutted the furnace room and conveniences, *The Press*, 6 July 1938, p.12.

In 1967 J. A. Hendry designed alterations to the interior which included reshaping the auditorium, enlarging and reconstructing the foyer, and removing the circle to make way for a technical room, wardrobe and the "Green Room". In 1983 the orchestral well was lowered and the seats in the hall were refurbished.

The present seating capacity is 432, with the "Green Room" being used for rehearsals and as a small theatre, seating up to 50 people.<sup>38</sup>

## The style of Radiant Hall

Radiant Hall was designed by Francis Willis in the Spanish Mission Style, popular during the late 1920s and early 1930s, especially for theatres, as it was associated with the Californian film industry.

Elements of the Spanish Mission Style include the *espadana* or curved parapet at the top of a shaped gable, the sun-dried look of white plaster or stucco, the multicoloured tilework, arches, and the twisted columns. Willis incorporated all these features into his 1931 design for New Regent Street.

Willis would have been familiar with the Opera House (known originally as the Tuam Street Public Hall and later as the St James Theatre) designed by T. S. Lambert and built in 1881-83. The twisted columns and Italianate windows also appear in the Radiant Hall.

The façade of Radiant Hall is symmetrical with a shaped gable crowned with a finial. Centrally-placed Palladian windows divided by twisted columns frame the entrance and two smaller sets of Palladian windows have been placed on either side of the entrance.<sup>39</sup> Cable moulding<sup>40</sup> has been used to highlight the arches. Two further windows with the same twisted columns complete with ogee arches, balance the second level of the façade.

The columns not only serve as vertical mullions for the windows, but are also found where the façade and side walls intersect and are incorporated into the gable purely for decorative purposes. The exposed brickwork on the corners of the lower level gives the impression of quoins.

Above the main entrance is a small stucco medallion with a profile of the Roman god Mercury who, in mythology, was the messenger of the gods. Mercury personifies Eloquence

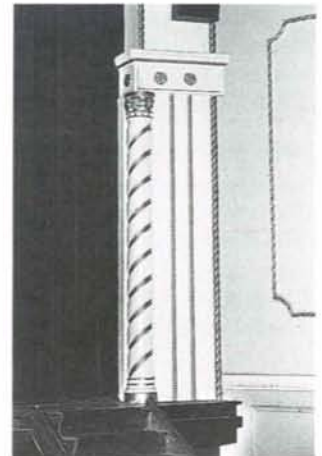
and Reason and the qualities of a teacher, so he would have been seen as the most appropriate god to symbolize the Radiant Health Club's ideals.

The hall has had internal modifications which give the former 'long corridor look' the appearance of a broad, compact theatre.<sup>41</sup> The arch framing the theatre stage (proscenium) echoes the outline of the gable, and the twisted columns also recall the exterior façade. Gold painted cable moulding is used extensively to add enrichment to the interior.

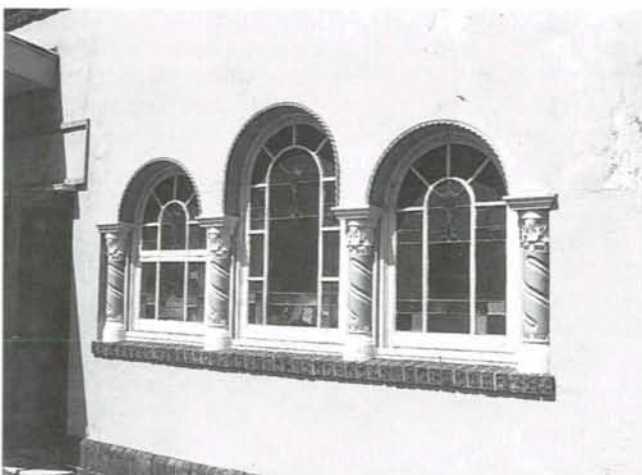
On either side of the stage there are two stucco reliefs. The west and east walls are divided by Tuscan style pilasters with windows in between and these are simply framed by cable moulding. The hall has a panelled ceiling which again uses the cable motif. Productions are still regularly performed in the Repertory Theatre.



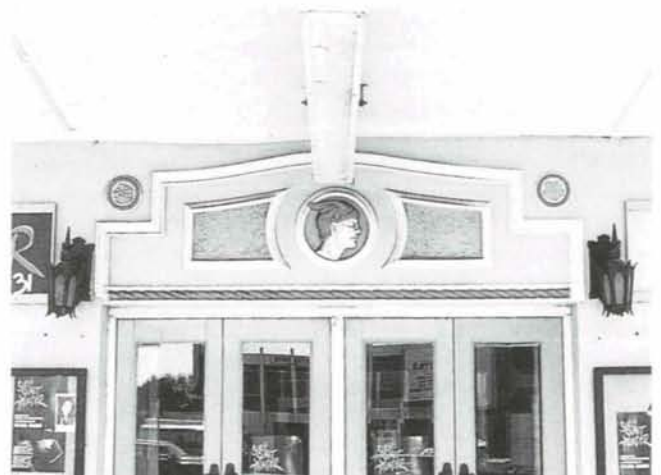
Stucco relief



Proscenium column



Palladian Window



Entrance detail

<sup>38</sup> Interview, Penny Giddens, manager of the Repertory Theatre, 5 June 1991.

<sup>39</sup> Palladio used the Serlian motif which was a window or archway with three openings, the central arch wider than the others. It became known as the Palladian window.

<sup>40</sup> A Romanesque moulding imitating a twisted cord.

<sup>41</sup> *The Press*, 29 June 1967, p.7.

## Celebrating 50 years in Christchurch

1929 was a year of celebration for Thomas and Jane Edmonds. The baking powder business had grown from the original room at their grocery store in 1879, to the modern three storeyed, purpose-built factory buildings in Ferry Road. Sales of baking powder had reached 2.5 million tins in 1928 and the future prosperity of the business seemed assured.

To commemorate the Jubilee of his residence in the city, Mr T. J. Edmonds advised the Council that he was prepared to make a donation of approximately £5,000 towards the River Bank Improvement (Scheme), comprising the erection of a Band Rotunda and Shelter, Riverside Walk and Clock Tower, together with special lighting effects.<sup>42</sup>

Edmonds had in fact written to the Mayor, Rev. J. K. Archer, on 1 May 1928 outlining his proposals<sup>43</sup> and he agreed to the Mayor announcing his gifts to the city during the Christchurch City Council's Diamond Jubilee celebrations.<sup>44</sup>

Edmonds' gifts also included the circular seat, lighting standards along the river, the curved balustrade wall along the river bank, the steps down to the landing at the river's edge, and seats for the reserve. These gifts were part of the Christchurch Beautifying Association's scheme for the Avon River and the area became known as Poplar Crescent, after the suburb of Poplar in London where Thomas Edmonds was born, and also in reference to the poplar trees lining the river bank.

## Plans for a new band rotunda

The military presence in New Zealand during the 1840s and 1860s led to the establishment of many brass bands throughout the country. Band music became a popular form of public entertainment and in the 1920s the Christchurch City Council subsidized regular band concerts. Thomas Edmonds loved music and was a keen supporter of the Woolston Brass Band.

Although he decided to donate a band rotunda in 1929 to coincide with his own Jubilee celebrations, it is likely that Edmonds was already aware of a proposal to site a new

band rotunda in Cambridge Terrace as early as 1924.<sup>45</sup> The oldest band rotunda in Christchurch was originally in Latimer Square and relocated to Victoria Square in 1894, however the noise of passing tram-cars made it impossible for band concerts to be heard and discussions were held regarding a new location.<sup>46</sup>

Edmonds' offer was accepted and tenders were called by the Christchurch City Council in April 1929. On 6 May 1929 the contract to build the Band Rotunda was given to Neil McGillivray, builder, of 201 Peterborough Street.



*The rotunda soon after completion*

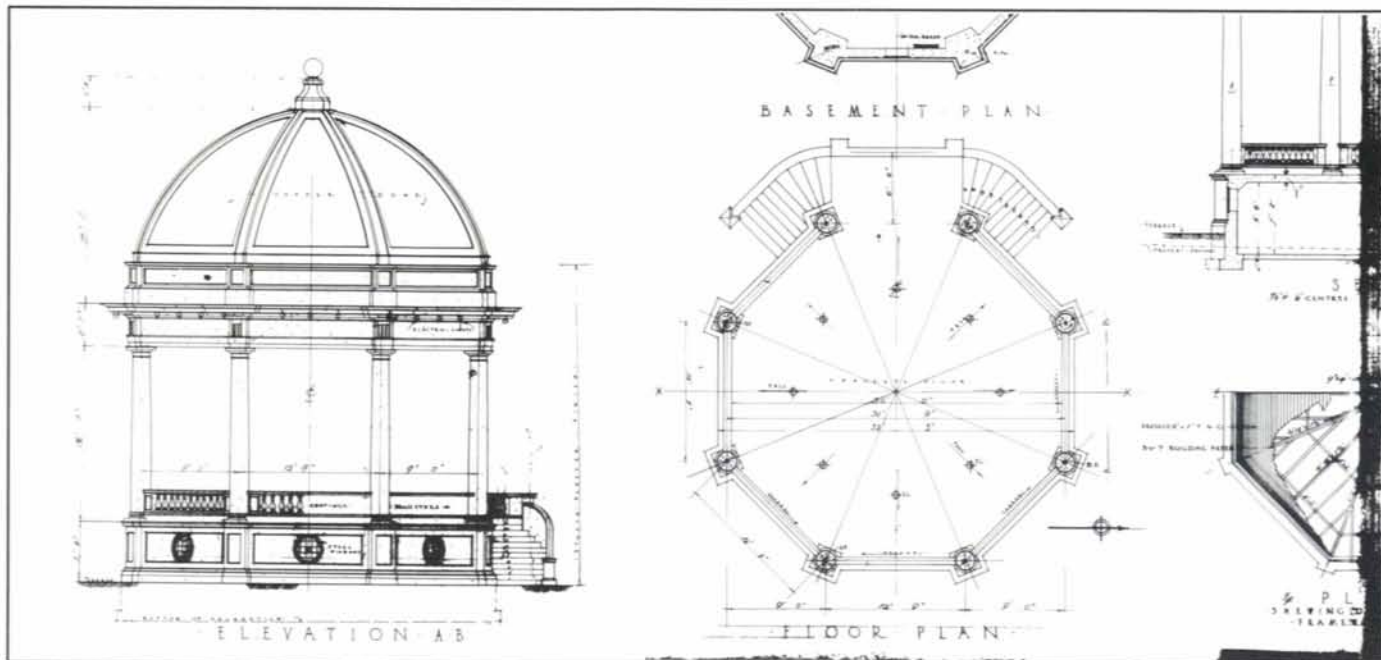
<sup>42</sup> *City of Christchurch Year Book 1929-30*, pp86-7.

<sup>43</sup> Letter 7 June 1928 T. J. Edmonds to Rev. J. K. Archer.

<sup>44</sup> Letter 26 May 1928 R. B. Owen of the "River Improvement Fund" to the Mayor Rev. J. K. Archer. The Jubilee celebrations were held from 26-29 May 1928.

<sup>45</sup> *The City Beautiful*, 1924, p.13.

<sup>46</sup> After Edmonds' rotunda had been built, the rotunda in Victoria Square was moved to Waltham Park.



Part of Victor Hean's plans for the rotunda

## The architect

Victor Robert John Hean was born in Christchurch on 4 November 1901. He was educated at Christchurch West District High School and attended the Canterbury School of Art from 1920-5, also studying engineering. Between March 1920 and July 1923 he was also employed as a draughting cadet with P. Graham & Son, Building Contractors.

The School of Art awarded Hean an architectural scholarship in December 1923. He worked as chief draughtsman for the architect H.St.A. Murray from July 1923 to August 1925 and from 1925 he was employed as an architectural assistant and draughtsman at the Christchurch City Council under A. R. Galbraith, City Engineer. In 1926 he designed the manager's house for the Halswell Quarry.

Hean qualified as a registered architect and became an Associate of the New Zealand Institute of Architects on 16 January 1929. On the recommendation of Galbraith, Hean became known as Assistant Architect in 1930.

Hean designed the Bowker Fountain in Victoria Square which became operational on 26 February 1931.<sup>47</sup> After a brief visit to Australia in 1932, Hean continued to work for the City Council until 1936, designing the Municipal



NEW BUILDING FOR MUNICIPAL ELECTRICITY DEPARTMENT. A perspective drawing of the proposed new building of the Municipal Electricity Department at the corner of Armagh and Manchester streets. The drawing is the work of Mr. V. R. J. Hean, of the City Engineer's Department.

Ruth Hean



Victor Hean

Ruth Hean

Electricity Department building (M.E.D.) which was opened on 6 May 1939.

From 1936-42 he was resident architect to the Palmerston North Hospital Board and in October 1942 he married Ruth Lees. Victor and Ruth Hean had three children.

Hean joined the Government Architect's Office in Wellington in 1942 and specialized in designing hospitals during the war period. He transferred to the Christchurch District Architect's office in 1945. Hean was the technical advisor to the Royal Commission after the fire at Ballantynes Department Store in November 1947. He was also instrumental in revising the fire safety codes and later became the advisory architect to the New Zealand Standards Institute.

In 1952 Hean was appointed Architect-in-Charge of State housing for the South Island and in 1955 he became the Assistant District Architect until his retirement in 1966.

Hean was a past chairman of the Canterbury branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects and gave many public lectures on modern architecture as well as fire protection in buildings. Victor Hean died on 10 February 1979.

<sup>47</sup> This was the first electric fountain in the Southern Hemisphere and has submersed lighting units and automatic control of water and colour effects.



## The builder

Neil McGillivray was born on 17 March 1879 in Herbert, North Otago. He married Annie Walburton about 1906 and they had three sons. McGillivray established his business in 1910, and had a joinery factory, first in Peterborough Street and later in Ely Street.<sup>48</sup> McGillivray's work consisted of both domestic and commercial buildings, which included the Linwood Post Office. His son Gerald joined him in the business which ceased in the late 1950s. Neil McGillivray died in Christchurch on 21 April 1960.



Neil McGillivray

McGillivray family

## The building

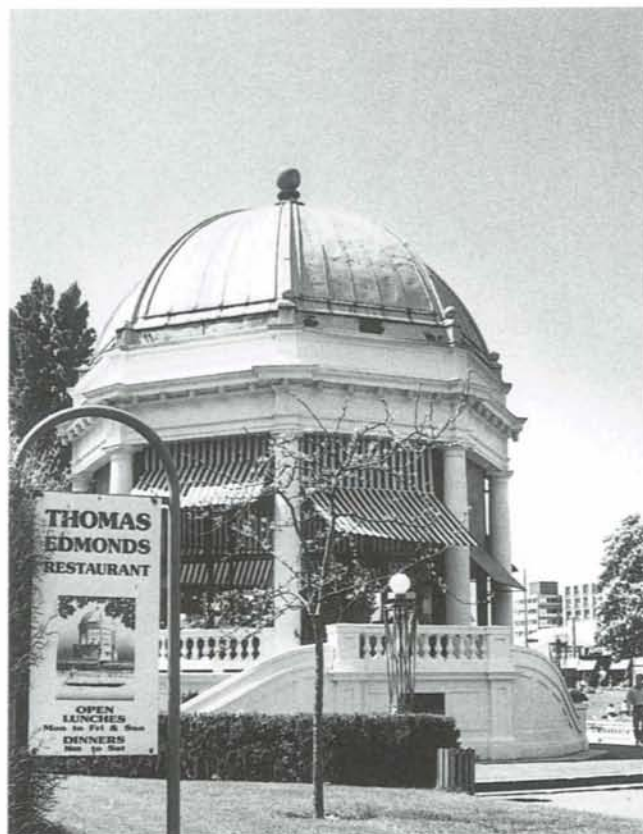
The band rotunda is octagonal in plan with an overall diameter of 10.2 metres and a height of 12 metres. The building is constructed from reinforced concrete with a stucco plaster finish and consists of a basement and ground floor. A column, 4.8 metres high, stands at each of the eight corners to support the dome which is of timber construction and sheathed in copper.

Six circular steel sash windows with wrought iron grilles have been placed around the base of the rotunda to allow light into the basement. This was originally used as a changing room for band members. The rotunda entrance is on the western side at the top of the curved staircase and a wooden door on the northern side leads into the basement.

Owing to a decline in public interest for band concerts and after many years of disuse and neglect, alterations were made in 1986 to convert the rotunda into a restaurant. The changes were designed by architect David Childs.

The overall character of the rotunda was maintained by fixing the glazing for the restaurant area within the external structure and adding striped awnings to control the sunlight in summer. The basement was converted into a kitchen and area for public conveniences.

Two of Edmonds' daughters, Irene Ballantyne and Gertrude Williams, among other members of the family, were present at the opening of the Thomas Edmonds Restaurant on 1 March 1987.



## The style of the band rotunda

The band rotunda was designed by Victor Hean in the High Renaissance style.<sup>49</sup> Proportion, harmony and a return to the Classical form were the principle features of this style of architecture. The rotunda is similar in style to Donato Bramante's Tempietto in Rome c.1502-3, which is considered to be the first great monument of the High Renaissance.

The hemispherical dome is another reference to classical antiquity because of its perfection of shape. The eight major ribs stem from the angles of the octagon and the clearly visible seams of the copper sheeting add to the overall symmetrical composition. The globe crowning the dome apart from being a decorative element, is also derived from antiquity.



The Tempietto



Rotunda

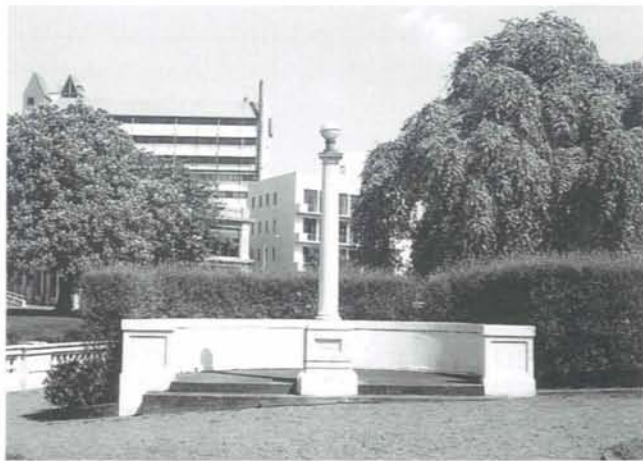
A History Of Art

<sup>49</sup> The original plans are signed by V.J.R. Hean

A balustrade runs continuously between the columns, an architectural element that was commonly used in the Renaissance, as was the circular window.<sup>50</sup> The design of the band rotunda shows the timelessness of the classical form.

There is a circular seat situated on the western side of the band rotunda. Its simple design is in keeping with the rotunda and the style of the rotunda pedestals have been repeated in the end piers of the semi-circular wall. The strong horizontal line of the wall is balanced with the vertical column. The original seat is to be replaced in the near future.

On the eastern side of the band rotunda is a rectangular shelter. Constructed out of reinforced concrete with a stucco finish, the style is along simple classical lines. The



Circular seat

shelter has three folding iron gates along the frontage and five wrought iron grilles over the window openings. These provided security for the bands' equipment.



Stairs, balustrade and circular window

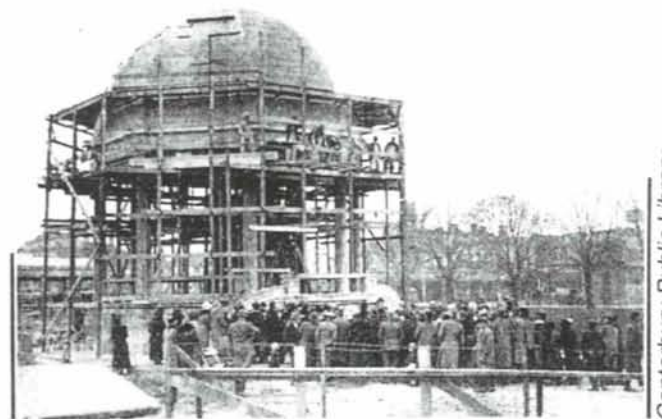


The shelter

## The official opening

Thomas Edmonds unveiled the black granite foundation stone on 26 September 1929 after unveiling the foundation stones for the Radiant Hall and the Clock Tower earlier the same day. By this stage the construction of the rotunda was well advanced.

The formal opening of the band rotunda was on the evening of Monday 11 November 1929. Jane Edmonds cut the ribbon across the entrance of the rotunda and the Edmonds' grandchildren presented bouquets to both Jane and the Mayoress. After the National Anthem had been played, Thomas Edmonds gave a speech in which he paid tribute to Jane who "has been my companion and helpmate for 50 years". Nine different bands gave a concert after the opening ceremony.<sup>51</sup>



Unveiling of the foundation stone

Canterbury Public Library

## The clock tower

Thomas Edmonds conceived the idea of including a clock tower and telephone cabinet as part of his scheme to beautify the southern side of the river between Manchester and Madras Streets. Edmonds' interest in this part of the river bank may have arisen from his association with the Theosophical Society building on the other side of the river.

The precedent for building a clock tower came from the Queen Victoria Jubilee Clock Tower, now in Victoria

Street.<sup>52</sup> This was assembled in 1897 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, and no doubt Edmonds thought the gift of another clock tower would be just as appropriate to celebrate his own Jubilee.

Edmonds commissioned Francis Willis to design the clock tower and telephone cabinet, with the Rennell Brothers of 49 Disraeli Street as builders, and William Trethewey as sculptor.

<sup>50</sup> Metal grilles over the ground floor windows of palazzos were a common form of security.

<sup>51</sup> *The Press* 12 November 1929, p.10, article: "Gifts to the City - New band rotunda opened - Citizens' appreciation".

<sup>52</sup> Originally at the corner of High and Manchester Streets. Arriving in 147 packages in December 1860, it was the first town clock and tower. The original intention was to erect it next to the Provincial Government buildings.



Hocken Library, Dunedin

The Clock Tower and Telephone Cabinet c. 1930

## The sculptor

William Thomas Trethewey was born in Christchurch in 1892. He left school at the age of 13 and started working as a woodcarver. Trethewey attended the Canterbury School of Art as a part time student and was taught by F. G. Gurnsey, an influential and gifted carver whose works include the Christchurch Anglican Cathedral, the Christchurch Hospital Nurses Memorial Chapel and the Bridge of Remembrance. In 1914 Trethewey moved briefly to Wellington where he studied life modelling under J. Ellis.



William Trethewey

Allan Trethewey



Allan Trethewey

William Trethewey working on the Captain Cook statue

Apart from a period between 1921 and 1924 when he worked with Daniel Berry, Trethewey was self-employed and his first studio was on the site now occupied by the Parkroyal Hotel. His next studio was at 199 Linwood Avenue but after complaints from neighbours he moved to Rutherford Street, Woolston. Trethewey was a member of, and exhibited at, the Canterbury Society of Arts. He was on the Council of the C.S.A. for many years, and was Vice-President between 1946-51.

Although he would have preferred to create sculpture as works of art, this medium was no longer in demand either publicly or privately so he therefore earned his living from monumental masonry, architectural modelling, marble and granite dadoes, wood and stone carving and interior decoration.<sup>53</sup>

However Trethewey did receive some public commissions. He made a life-size statue of Dr Margaret Cruickshank, the first woman to graduate from Otago Medical School. Dr Cruickshank died in the 1918 influenza epidemic and Trethewey created the statue from photographs. The statue is situated in Waimate where Dr Cruickshank practised.

<sup>53</sup> The company he founded, Trethewey Stone Industries, is still producing such items in Auckland.

Trethewey also executed a war memorial realistically portraying a New Zealand soldier, which was unveiled in Kaiapoi on 26 April 1922.

Trethewey won the competition to erect the statue of Captain Cook which was unveiled on 10 August 1932, in Victoria Square. He was commissioned to make New Zealand's last memorial to the 1st World War, The Christchurch War Memorial in Cathedral Square, a project which took over three years to complete and was unveiled on 9 June 1937.

## The foundation stone

The foundation stone was unveiled on the same day as those of the Radiant Hall and Band Rotunda. It is located on the north side of the clock tower and reads:

*This clock tower, telephone cabinet  
and all standard lights in  
Poplar Crescent were presented  
by T. J. Edmonds to celebrate  
50 years residence in Christchurch  
26 September 1929*

On the south side another tablet reads:

*H. Francis Willis - architect  
Rennell Bros - builder  
W. T. Trethewey - sculptor*

In 1931 Trethewey completed the architectural modelling on the New Regent Street shop façades and in 1932, as a personal friend of Thomas Edmonds, he carved the headstone for the family grave when Edmonds died. After he retired Trethewey took up clock making, manufacturing all the working parts. He was described by his son Allan as a flamboyant character who liked to wear yellow boots and a purple cravat.<sup>54</sup> William Trethewey died in 1956, aged 64 years.



A NEW CLOCK TOWER—The unveiling of the foundation stone of the gift clock tower near the Nedra Street bridge by the donor, Mr T. J. Edmonds. On the left, facing the camera, is the H. T. J. Thacker (Deputy-Mayor). Seated to him is the Rev. J. K. Archer (Mayor of Christchurch) and on the right, Mr Edmonds.

Canterbury Public Library

## The building

The clock tower is square in plan and is constructed from a mixture of volcanic rock with Mt Somers limestone facings, while the hexagonal capped roof is of plastered reinforced concrete.<sup>55</sup> A wooden door on the east side allows entry into the tower and inscribed on the pavement outside the door is *Poplar Crescent 1929*.

Windows on all sides, above the buttresses and in the roof, allow light in, as do the two clock faces on the east and west sides. Thomas Edmonds specified these details in a letter to the Mayor on 7 June 1928. Two identical medallions have been placed on the north and south sides and the four buttresses at each corner sit on a concrete base. Globe lights are attached to the mouths of the gargoyles on all four sides with the inscriptions: *Faith, Hope, Peace, Charity*.

## The style of the clock tower

The clock tower was designed by Francis Willis in what might be termed the Free Style of late nineteenth century English architecture. In Britain there had been a conscious effort to create a new architectural style for large buildings which was free from historical precedents.<sup>56</sup> Arts and Crafts architects such as Norman Shaw, Charles Mackintosh and C. Harrison Townsend were instrumental in the development of the Free Style.

The Edmonds Clock Tower is constructed from local materials and integrates sculptural elements into the exterior facade.<sup>57</sup> Gothic elements include the use of buttresses, tracery in the small windows below the clock faces and

East side doorway



medallions, gargoyles in the form of lion heads, stylized leaves on the corners at the top of the clock tower, and the slightly pointed arch on the door panel.

The use of the keystone is a classical element which can be seen in the foundation stones, clock faces and medallions and also in the lintels above the door and windows.

The medallions portray a figure as Father Time, with a scythe and hour-glass, which bears more than a passing resemblance to Thomas Edmonds. In choosing this image Trethewey has immortalized Edmonds like the Roman emperors of antiquity.

<sup>54</sup> Interview 27 March 1991, Allan Trethewey, son.

<sup>55</sup> Interview 30 April 1991, Barry Van Uden, Stonemason who has previously carried out restoration work on the clock tower.

<sup>56</sup> Service, 1977, p.38.

<sup>57</sup> The Arts and Crafts Movement promoted the tradition of good craftsmanship and the integration of sculpture and painting into architecture. The volcanic rocks would have come from Banks Peninsula.

*Faith, Hope, Peace and Charity* were also classically inspired and were usually depicted in the form of female figures. However in the Middle Ages, they were represented as part of Christian virtues.<sup>58</sup> Their meanings have now become secularized with the passage of time.

An element of the Free Style was to use flora and fauna in building decoration. Decorative carving in the form of acanthus leaves and fauna can be seen at the top of each buttress.

An owl symbolizing wisdom, is depicted on the west side, and a squirrel whose tail is stylized in keeping with the acanthus leaf is on the south-east buttress. Two unidentified birds are depicted on the south-west and south-east buttresses.

Despite the variety of styles and complexity of symbolism, the clock tower retains a sense of solid unity with the use of rough-faced rocks constructed in symmetrical proportions.



East clock face & window



Medallion, north side

## The telephone cabinet

Edmonds' initial plans for the area included a covered way containing a telephone cabinet, drinking fountain, and letter box.<sup>59</sup>

The telephone cabinet is semi-circular in plan and constructed in the same materials as the clock tower. A door on the west side gave access to the former telephone and letter box. (It has since been boarded up due to vandalism.) A drinking fountain is located on the north side and a window to the south. The flat roof is decorated at regular intervals with projecting stylized acanthus leaves. Inscribed around the length of the entablature are the words

*Christchurch the Garden City on the Avon*

No exact style can be given to this small building, as it was designed to Edmonds' specifications. A Tuscan-style entablature has been used as the base for the roof, and the use of the acanthus leaf below the drinking fountain is another classical motif. The simple character of the telephone cabinet is accentuated by the use of white Mt Somers limestone which contrasts in colour and texture with the coarse volcanic rocks.



## Bickerton Reserve

Thomas Edmonds was a close friend of Professor Alexander Bickerton. Bickerton was born in England in 1842 and arrived in Christchurch in 1874 to take up his appointment as the first professor of chemistry at Canterbury College. After his controversial dismissal from the university in 1902, he developed his home at Wainoni into a public pleasure park. This became a famous attraction in Christchurch with its artificial lake, fireworks displays, garden walks, sideshows and fairground rides. Thomas Edmonds gave financial assistance to Bickerton after his dismissal from the university and, with daughter Beatrice, was visiting Bickerton in London when Bickerton died on 22 January 1929.<sup>60</sup> In 1931 Edmonds donated the land on the corner of Wainoni Road and Avonside Drive as a reserve in memory of Professor Bickerton.



Canterbury Museum

<sup>58</sup> Hall, J. 1979, p.33. These were made up of the three 'theological virtues' faith, hope and charity, and the four 'cardinal virtues' justice, prudence, fortitude and temperance. These were sometimes paired with appropriate vices.

<sup>59</sup> Letter 7 June 1928 T. J. Edmonds to Mayor, Rev. J. K. Archer.

<sup>60</sup> Interview, Beatrice Jauncey, op cit.

# Conclusion

The philanthropy of Thomas and Jane Edmonds has contributed significantly to Christchurch's architectural heritage. The Christchurch City Council has recognized this through its purchase of the factory gardens, by commissioning an extensive refurbishment of the clocktower and with a proposal to have the area surrounding the clock tower and telephone cabinet turned into a park in memory of

Thomas Edmonds. The establishment of this park will further enhance Edmonds' vision for the beautification of this part of the Avon River, also known as 'Poplar Crescent'.

Through their gifts or financing of both buildings and public facilities, Thomas and Jane Edmonds have left a valuable legacy to the city.



Poplar Crescent



# Glossary

- Ogee arches** A group of pointed arches, usually of four arcs.
- Quoins** A dressed stone or brick at the corner of a wall of masonry.
- Portico** A roofed space, open or partly enclosed, forming the entrance to a temple, house or church.

- Cornice** A projecting ornamental moulding along the top of a building or wall.
- Proscenium** Area in front of a stage curtain, usually with an arch framing the stage.
- Pilaster** A rectangular column projecting slightly from a wall.



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