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New Zealand Historic Places Trust Pouhere Taonga

## **Section 37A Review Report**

# **Manchester Courts**

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## **1. REVIEW INFORMATION**

### **1.1. Information Relating to the Original Registration**

Refer to Appendix 5 for further information.

### **1.2. Reason for Review**

The review is to remove the registration as the place or area has been demolished.

### **1.3. Nature of Demolition or Destruction**

The place or area was demolished over a period of several months following damage caused by the Canterbury (Darfield) Earthquake of 4 September 2010.

### **1.4. NZHPT Involvement**

Following the Canterbury (Darfield) Earthquake of 4 September 2010, NZHPT understands that the Manchester Courts building was inspected by Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) and engineers. Numerous cracks, including diagonal cracking on the façades were observed, and the building was deemed a threat to public safety and in danger of immediate collapse.

On 7 September 2010, when the city was still under a 'State of Emergency', NZHPT staff working out of the Civil Defence Headquarters learned that the Manchester Courts building was about to come down. NZHPT staff provided Register information about the significance of the building to the heritage team of the Christchurch City Council, who passed it on to relevant engineers and Council staff. Two NZHPT staff members were granted written permission from the Civil Defence Controller on 7 September 2010 to enter the cordon to take photographs of the Manchester Courts building from a safe distance.

Later on 7 September 2010, NZHPT were advised by the Christchurch City Council that no demolition would be occurring without peer reviewed engineer reports and if demolition was going to occur, a demolition plan would need to be approved by Council.

#### *Structural Advice*

Publicly available information from the Council includes a structural engineer's report dated 13 September 2010 from Gridline Limited stated the MLC (Manchester Courts) building was significantly unstable. A report from Detection Services Ltd was prepared after ground penetrating radar was undertaken on the exterior of the building to a methodology agreed with the Council's engineer. A second structural engineer's report dated 5 October 2010

from Gridline Limited noted that further investigations, consisting of drilling piers and walls of the building, had been undertaken and that no steel had been found in any of the external elevations of the building. This inspection and report had been verified by an independent engineer who was present when this work was undertaken. A verbal report from a Council manager was presented to a Council meeting, including NZHPT General Manager Southern, on 6 October 2010, where Councillors were advised that an engineer engaged by the Council also recommended that the building should be demolished because of structural issues.

NZHPT engaged Win Clark, consultant structural engineer and New Zealand Society for Earthquake Engineering Executive Officer, to provide advice to NZHPT on a range of buildings affected by the Canterbury (Darfield) Earthquake. Manchester Courts was one of hundreds of buildings the NZHPT viewed in the days immediately following the earthquake, and it was clear that this building had sustained significant damage. NZHPT and Win Clark later viewed more detailed structural engineering reports in the hope that a reasonable way to retain this building could be found.

On 9 November, after concerns were raised that the building may have been incorrectly assessed, NZHPT staff viewed the building again accompanied by Win Clark. Win Clark remained of the view that:

- The building's strength in terms of earthquake resistance was limited, a finding that is very similar to that outlined in the first engineering assessments;
- The exposure of the steel gravity frame, which principally supported the building's timber floors, was expected and was considered in early engineering reports following 4 September;
- The earthquake resistant capacity of the building, such as it is, does not rely on the steel gravity framing to any great extent.

Although the demolition of the highly significant Manchester Courts building has been deeply regretted, NZHPT was not in a position to halt demolition.

NZHPT staff regularly photographed the building from outside the cordoned area during demolition. The site was last viewed by NZHPT staff late on the morning of 22 February 2011, where it was observed that only a small portion (approximately two metres by three metres) of the rear brick wall was still standing and that wall remnant was actively being demolished. At 12.51pm on 22 February 2011 a 6.3 magnitude earthquake struck Christchurch and the CBD area including the Manchester-Hereford Street corner has been closed since this time. A live web-cam recording of the demolition ceased at the moment of this earthquake, confirming that the building had only a very minor portion of wall remaining and was all but completely demolished (refer to web

cam image dated 22 February 2011, Section 5.3 of this review report).

## **2. IDENTIFICATION<sup>1</sup>**

### **2.1. Name of Registration**

*Registered Name:* Manchester Courts

*Other Names:* MLC building, New Zealand Express Company building

### **2.2. Location Information**

*Current Registered Address*

158-160 Manchester Street

Christchurch

Canterbury

### **2.3. Legal Description**

Pt Sec 823 TN of Christchurch (CTs CB24B/334, CB24B/335), Canterbury Land District

(note the Register information lists Pt TS 748 Chch City Lot 2 DP 45933 as the legal description but this is not correct).

### **2.4. Summary**

The following text is based on the NZHPT Register database:

This building was built for the New Zealand Express Company in 1905-1906 and at the time of its construction it was the tallest commercial building in Christchurch. The New Zealand Express Company was a Dunedin-based firm established in 1867, with offices throughout New Zealand. They acted as carriers, and customs, shipping and express forwarding agents, and by the beginning of the twentieth century were a major New Zealand employer. Their Christchurch building was designed by Alfred and Sidney Luttrell, who arrived in New Zealand in 1902, and whose principal contribution to the history of New Zealand architecture was the introduction of the Chicago 'skyscraper'. They were also noted for their use of concrete. The foundation and first two storeys of the New Zealand Express building are reinforced concrete. This was probably, according to Geoffrey Thornton, the first use of reinforced concrete in a commercial building in Christchurch.

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<sup>1</sup> This section is supplemented by visual aids in Appendix 1 of the report.

Stylistically, this building is a compromise between British Edwardian architecture and the Chicago skyscraper style of the 1880s and 1890s. One example of this eclecticism can be seen in the corner tourelle, which was unusual in contemporary American architecture, but common within the English tradition. Technically the use of steel ties and standards, combined with the traditional brick masonry of the top five floors showed the same mix of sources. The 'Chicago style' was defined by the use of internal steel frames, which was considered to mean that the external walls were no longer load-bearing and therefore the height of the buildings could increase, and windows rather than masonry could dominate the exterior. With the New Zealand Express Company building the Luttrells moved one step closer towards a true 'skyscraper' construction method, which they finally achieved with their design for the same company's head office in Bond Street, Dunedin, two years later.

Standing at the south-east corner of the intersection of Manchester and Hereford Streets, the former New Zealand Express Company building was approximately forty metres high and rose seven storeys above the street. Stylistically and technically the building is a compromise between contemporary English building style and practice and that of American commercial architecture which evolved in Chicago during the 1880s and 1890s.

The foundations and first two storeys of this commercial building were made of reinforced concrete and above this base conventional brickwork utilised steel ties and standards. The different modes of construction were visually expressed by a change in the architectural treatment of the two principal elevations. Above the visually emphatic platform created by the ground and first floors, which were styled to imitate rusticated masonry construction, exposed brick piers rose to establish a grid-like intermediary zone between the base and roof. The cement rendered spandrels in this zone were slightly recessed to enhance the verticality of the piers which are terminated by arched window openings, on the fourth, fifth or sixth floors, which also serve to accentuate the building's height. Both of these architectural devices were commonly used in the design of Chicago skyscrapers, although the irregular placement of the arches undermined their vertical emphasis somewhat. The corner tourelle, which rose through four floors above the base, visually uniting the two principal elevations, also weakened the Chicago School influence within the composition for it is much more typical of English Edwardian architecture than of American commercial design.

Unlike the north and west elevations those facing south and east were clearly not intended to remain visible from the street but as the building was still flanked by low-rise commercial structures it was possible to see the simple window openings which pierced the plain brick walls of these elevations. The south-east corner of the building was inset slightly to accommodate an external fire stair and thus also allowed additional lighting for the adjacent offices. The

cornice and parapet which once crowned the building had been unsympathetically replaced by a shallow hipped roof of steel and this greatly detracted from the visual impact of Alfred Luttrell's design.

Inside the former New Zealand Express Company building, which was heated by the original boiler system located on the ground floor, conventional office and retail space was arranged around a central stairwell and lift shaft.

The New Zealand Express Company building, most commonly known as Manchester Courts or the MLC building, was significant as one of the earliest attempts at the Chicago skyscraper style in New Zealand. The building's combination of contemporary American styles with the existing tradition of British architecture meant this building occupied a unique place within the history of New Zealand commercial architecture. The construction of Manchester Courts helped to establish the Luttrell brothers as architects in New Zealand and the magnitude and style of this building reflected the importance and size of the company it was built for. The former New Zealand Express Company building made a distinctive contribution to the character of a major inner-city thoroughfare and its loss through demolition following the Canterbury (Darfield) Earthquake of 4 September 2010 is regrettable.

### **3. SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

#### **3.1. Confirmation of Registration and Demolition**

The building was originally registered 'C' classification in 1981 (HP 191/1981) as the MLC Building (formerly NZ Express Co Building). In 1991 a new 'B' classification registration record was created for the building (HP 267/1991). As this created a duplication, Record 1905 was deleted from the Register in 1994 (BD1994/5/6). Registration Record 5307 remains the evidence that the building is registered. (Refer to extract from Board minute HP 267/1991, Section 5.2 of this review report).

The demolition was well documented in the media and explanations of the rationale and process of demolition is recorded on the Christchurch City Council website. The Christchurch City Council report dated 4 October 2010 for the proposed demolition of the building, as approved, can be found on the Council website:

<http://www1.ccc.govt.nz/council/proceedings/2010/october/cnclcover4th/4.proposeddemolitionof160manchesterstreet.pdf>

#### **3.2. Evidence of Demolition or Destruction**

Photographs of the building in various stages of demolition are shown in Section 5.3 of this review report.

### **4. OTHER INFORMATION**

#### **4.1. Key Physical Dates**

1905-6	Construction of building
2010	Demolition of building

#### **4.2. Team Review and Response**

The NZHPT Christchurch office of the Southern Regional team was informed on 18 January 2011 of the proposal to remove this registration as the place or area has been demolished or destroyed in its entirety.

The Christchurch office agreed that there is sufficient evidence to indicate that the place or area has been demolished in its entirety and should therefore be removed from the Register.

### **4.3. NZHPT Regional File Number**

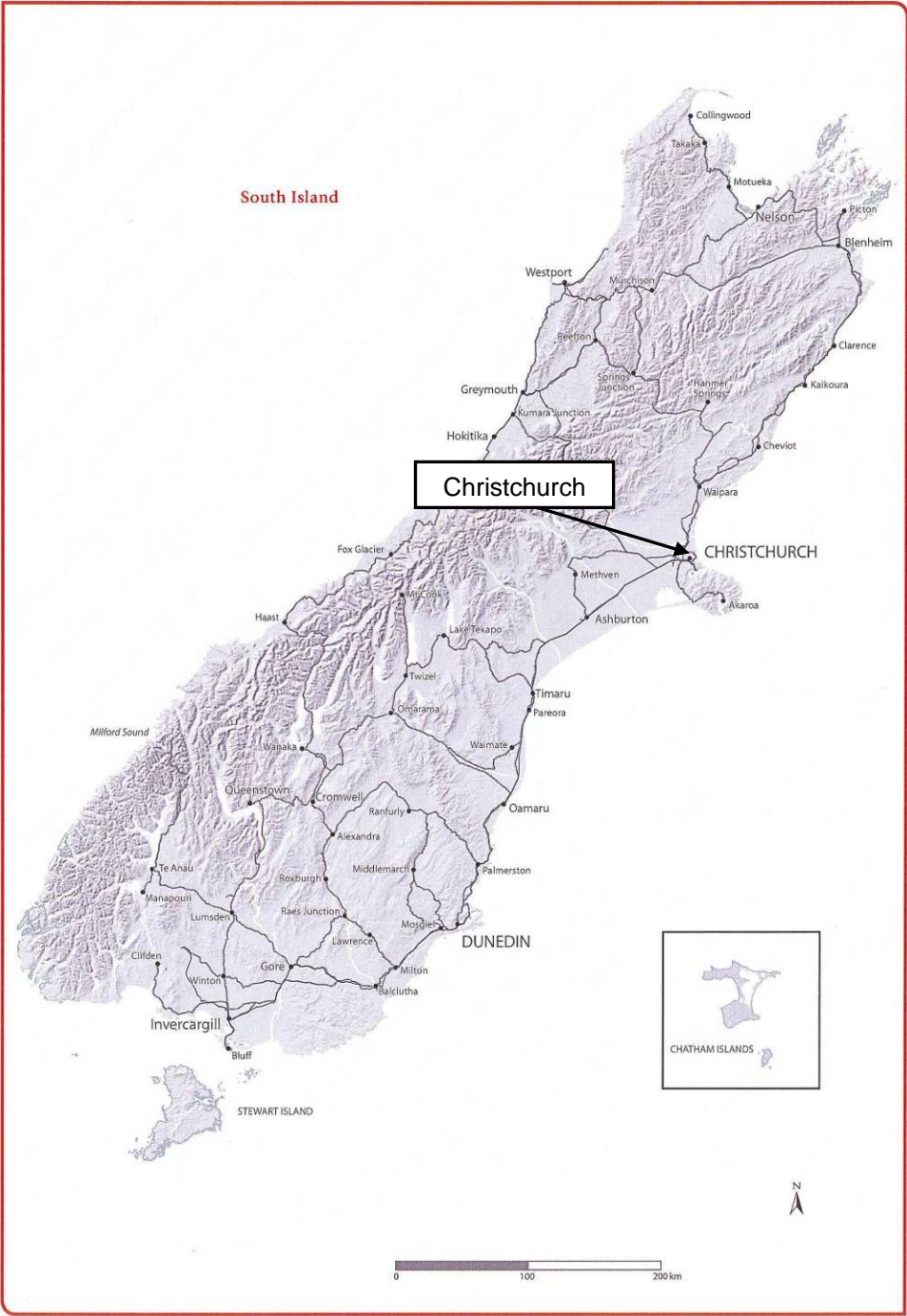
12009-207

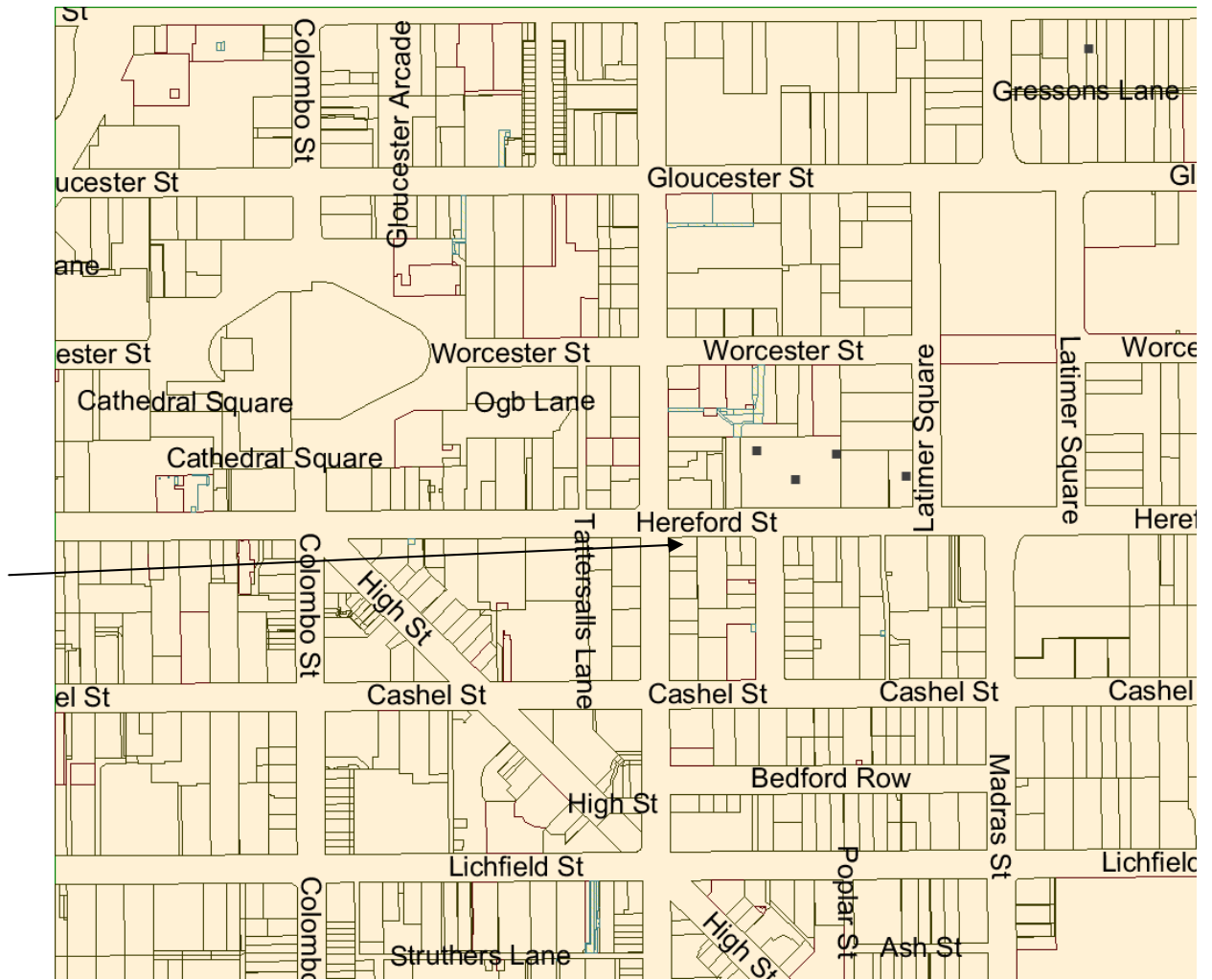


**5. APPENDICES**

**5.1. Appendix 1: Visual Identification Aids**

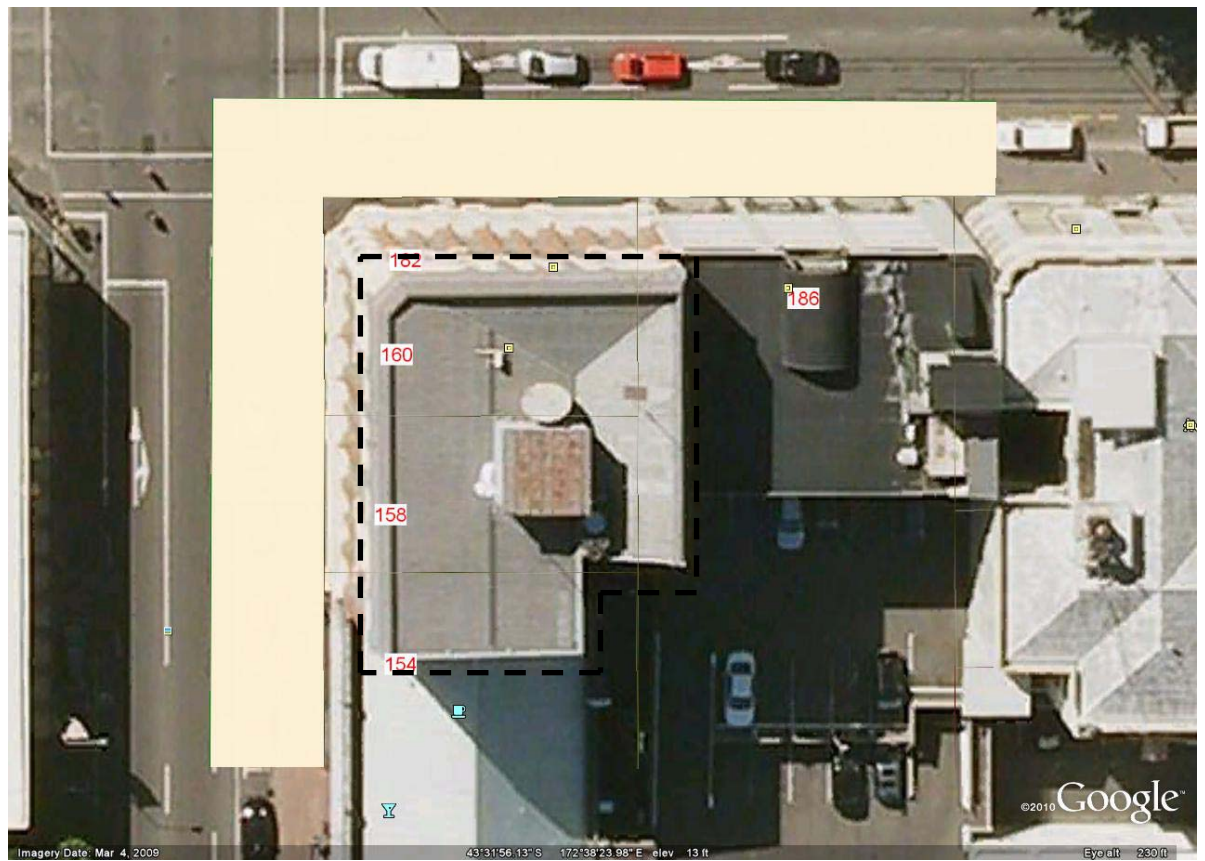
*Location Maps*





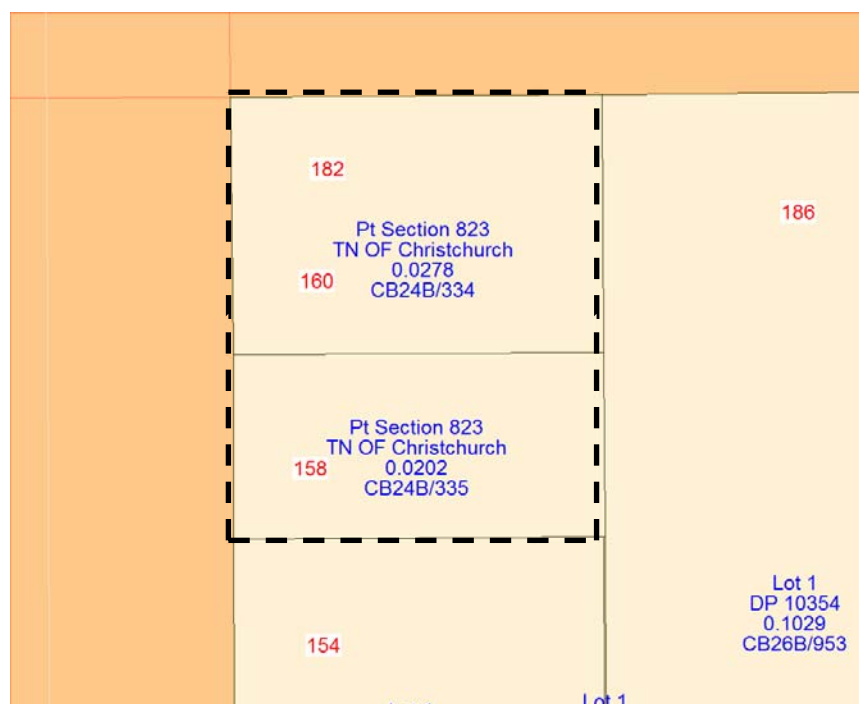
Detail of map of central Christchurch showing location of Manchester Courts site by arrow.





Google Earth view on Quickmap showing close up aerial view of Manchester Courts building prior to demolition. [Note the angle of the aerial of this tall building makes it appear as if it extends into adjoining properties but this is not the case].

*Map of Physical Extent of Registration*



The physical extent is the land parcels Pt Section 823 TN OF Christchurch, as shown by dashed lines above.



**COMPUTER FREEHOLD REGISTER  
UNDER LAND TRANSFER ACT 1952**

Search Copy



R. W. Muir  
Registrar-General  
of Land

Identifier **CB24B/334**  
Land Registration District **Canterbury**  
Date Issued 14 December 1982

**Prior References**  
CB194/195

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Estate Fee Simple  
Area 278 square metres more or less  
Legal Description Part Section 823 Town of Christchurch

**Proprietors**  
Victoria Regina Limited

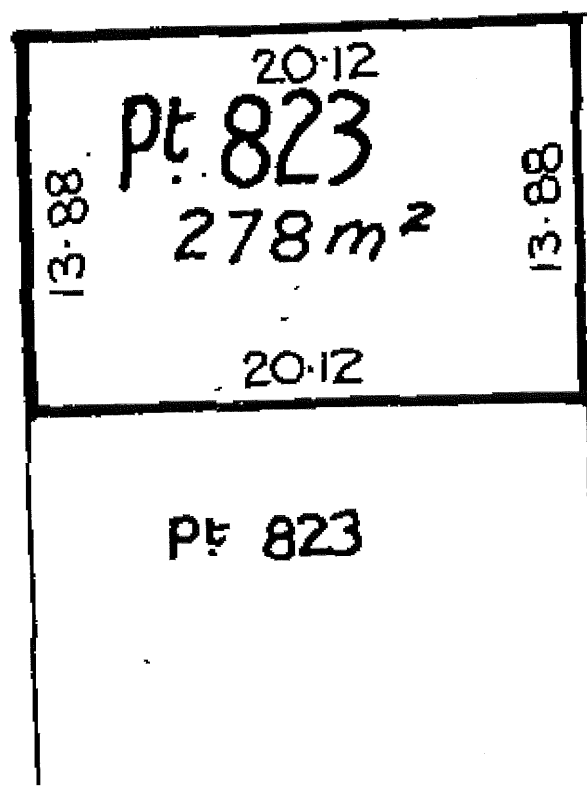
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**Interests**  
6677073.8 Mortgage to Bank of New Zealand - 6.12.2005 at 9:00 am



20.12  
MANCHESTER STREET

HEREFORD STREET



20.12

20.12



**COMPUTER FREEHOLD REGISTER  
UNDER LAND TRANSFER ACT 1952**

**Search Copy**



**Identifier** CB24B/335  
**Land Registration District** Canterbury  
**Date Issued** 14 December 1982

**Prior References**  
CB204/296

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**Estate** Fee Simple  
**Area** 202 square metres more or less  
**Legal Description** Part Section 823 Town of Christchurch  
**Proprietors**  
Victoria Regina Limited

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**Interests**  
6677073.8 Mortgage to Bank of New Zealand - 6.12.2005 at 9:00 am





## 5.2. Appendix 2: Information Relating to the Registration

NZHPT Staff Use Only



### Manchester Courts

**Location:** 158-160 Manchester Street, CHRISTCHURCH

**Other Names:** New Zealand Express Company Building

**Record Number:** 6307

**Registration Type:** Historic Place Category I

**National File No:**

**Local Authority:** Christchurch City Council

**Date Registered:** 19 Sep 1991

**Local Authority:** Christchurch City District Plan Operative (in part) 21 November 2005. Item listed in Appendix 1:

**Listing:** List of Protected Buildings, Places and Objects

**Heritage**

**Protection**

**Mechanisms:**

**Legal Description:** Pt TS 748 Chch City Lot 2 DP 45933

**Location**

**Description:**

**NZAA Site No:**

**Extent of**

**Registration:**

**Chattels/Objects:**

**Registration** As at Registration

**Status:**

**Brief Description:** The following text was prepared as part of an upgrade project and was completed [30 Aug 2001]:

This building was built for the New Zealand Express Company in 1905-1906 and at the time of its construction it was the tallest commercial building in Christchurch. The New Zealand Express Company was a Dunedin-based firm established in 1867, with offices throughout New Zealand. They acted as carriers, and customs, shipping and express forwarding agents, and by the beginning of the twentieth century were a major New Zealand employer. Their Christchurch building was designed by Alfred and Sidney Luttrell, who arrived in New Zealand in 1902, and whose principal contribution to the history of New Zealand architecture was the introduction of the Chicago 'skyscraper'. They were also noted for their use of concrete. The foundation and first two storeys of the New Zealand Express building are reinforced concrete. This was probably, according to Geoffrey Thornton, the first use of reinforced concrete in a commercial building in Christchurch.

Stylistically, this building is a compromise between British Edwardian architecture and the Chicago skyscraper style of the 1880s and 1890s. One example of this eclecticism can be seen in the corner tourelle, which was unusual in contemporary American architecture, but common within the English tradition. Technically the use of steel ties and standards, combined with the traditional brick masonry of the top five floors shows the same mix of sources. The 'Chicago style' was defined by the use of internal steel frames, which meant that the external walls were no longer load-bearing and therefore the height of the buildings could increase, and windows rather than masonry could dominate the exterior. With the New Zealand Express Company building the Luttrells moved one step closer towards a true 'skyscraper' construction method, which they finally achieved with their design for the same company's head office in Bond Street, Dunedin, two years later.

The New Zealand Express Company building, now known as Manchester Courts, is significant as one of the earliest attempts at the Chicago skyscraper style in New Zealand. The building's combination of contemporary American styles with the existing tradition of British architecture means this building occupies a unique place within the history of New Zealand commercial architecture. The construction of Manchester Courts helped to establish the Luttrell brothers as architects in New Zealand and the magnitude and style of this building reflected the importance and size of the company it was built for.

*Weblinks:*

*Current Uses:* Office building/Offices [Retail and Commercial]

*Former Uses:* Office building/Offices [Retail and Commercial]

*Notable Features:*

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**Historical Narrative:** This historic place was registered under the Historic Places Act 1980. The following text is from the original Building Classification Committee report considered by the NZHPT Board at the time of registration.

**DESCRIPTION:**

General carriers, customs, shipping and express forwarding agents, the New Zealand Express Company which was established in 1867 was a Dunedin-based firm with offices throughout New Zealand. Having become one of the country's largest employers by the turn of the century, the company in 1905 commissioned the Luttrell brothers to design an office building for its Christchurch branch. The New Zealand Express Company building on the corner of Hereford and Manchester Streets was completed towards the end of 1906, at an approximate cost of £19,000. Two years later the same company commissioned the Luttrells to design its head office in Dunedin, thus demonstrating their approval of the corporate image which the Luttrells had created for the firm in the Christchurch building.

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**Construction Professionals:** Architect - Luttrell, Alfred Edgar And Edward Sidney

**Dates:** Designed - 1905

Original Construction - 1905 - 1906

Modification - 1986 - 1987 - Refurbished; parapet removed, reclad in steel

**Physical Description:** This historic place was registered under the Historic Places Act 1980. This report includes the text from the original Building Classification Committee report considered by the NZHPT Board at the time of registration.

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:**

Standing at the south-east corner of the intersection of Manchester and Hereford Streets, the former New Zealand Express Company building is approximately forty metres high and rises seven storeys above the street. Stylistically and technically the building is a compromise between contemporary English building style and practice and that of American commercial architecture which evolved in Chicago during the 1880s and 1890s.

The foundations and first two storeys of this commercial building are made of reinforced concrete and above this base conventional brickwork is strengthened with steel ties and standards. The different modes of construction are visually expressed by a change in the architectural treatment of the two principal elevations. Above the visually emphatic platform created by the ground and first floors, which are styled to imitate rusticated masonry construction, exposed brick piers rise to establish a grid-like intermediary zone between the base and roof. The cement rendered spandrels in this zone are slightly recessed to enhance the verticality of the piers which are terminated by arched window openings, on the fourth, fifth or sixth floors, which also serve to accentuate the building's height. Both of these architectural devices were commonly used in the design of Chicago skyscrapers, although the irregular placement of the arches undermines their vertical emphasis somewhat. The corner tourelle, which rises through four floors above the base, visually uniting the two principal elevations, also weakens the Chicago School influence within the composition for it is much more typical of English Edwardian architecture than of American commercial design.

Unlike the north and west elevations those facing south and east were clearly not intended to remain visible from the street but as the building is still flanked by low-rise commercial structures it is possible to see the simple window openings which pierce the plain brick walls of these elevations. The south-east corner of the building is inset slightly to accommodate an external fire stair and thus also allows additional lighting for the adjacent offices. The cornice and parapet which once crowned the building have since been unsympathetically replaced by a shallow hipped roof of steel and this greatly detracts from the visual impact of Alfred Luttrell's design.

Inside the former New Zealand Express Company building, which is heated by the original boiler system located on the ground floor, conventional office and retail space is arranged around a central stairwell and lift shaft.

**Construction** Reinforced concrete foundations, ground floor and first floor. Brick masonry above with steel ties and standards. Plaster trim and wooden floors. Height 39.65 metres.

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**Assessment under Section 23 of the Historic Places Act 1993**

**Assessment by** Section 23(1) Registered under previous legislation (HPA 1980)  
**Trust Board:** Section 23(2) Registered under previous legislation (HPA 1980).

**Section 23(1) Assessment**

**Historical Significance:** This historic place was registered under the Historic Places Act 1980. The following text is from the original Building Classification Committee report considered by the NZHPT Board at the time of registration.

The progressive design and size of the New Zealand Express Company's Christchurch branch firmly indicates the company's importance as a commercial enterprise in New Zealand earlier this century. Although the company's fortunes later waned it was a dominant force in New Zealand business for many years.

**Physical Significance:** This historic place was registered under the Historic Places Act 1980. The following text is from the original Building Classification Committee report considered by the NZHPT Board at the time of registration.

**ARCHITECTURAL QUALITY:**

Alfred and Sidney Luttrell introduced the Chicago "skyscraper" to New Zealand in works such as the Lyttelton Times Company building (Cathedral Square, 1902) and the offices for the New Zealand Express Company in Christchurch (1905-06) and in Dunedin (1908-10). Literally reaching new heights in commercial design, the Luttrells developed a sophisticated commercial architectural imagery after their arrival in New Zealand, based primarily upon bold compositional effects rather than the use of applied ornament. When built, the Express Company building was the tallest commercial structure in Christchurch.

The use of reinforced concrete construction is noteworthy. It is a very early example of the use of this modern building material for a non-engineering structure in New Zealand. Stylistically and technically the former New Zealand Express Company building is a compromise between English Edwardian architecture and the Chicago skyscraper style of the 1880s and 1890s. Despite the unfortunate addition of a steel mansard roof it remains a striking structure in predominantly low-rise Christchurch.

**TOWNSCAPE/LANDMARK VALUE:**

The former New Zealand Express Company building makes a distinctive contribution to the character of a major inner-city thoroughfare.

**Cultural Significance:**

**Section 23(2) Assessment**

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**Other Information:** This historic place was registered under the Historic Places Act 1980. This report includes the text from the original Building Classification Committee report considered by the NZHPT Board at the time of registration.

**Associated NZHPT Registrations:**  
**DOC Managed:**  
**Reserve:**

VNZ Number: 22700 24800

Iwi:

GPS: Easting: 2,480,903.89 Northing: 5,741,622.72 Taken From: Mapping co-ordinates taken from Quickmap

**Other NZHPT Information:** Original Building Classification Committee report details added to Register Database (Chris Horwell, NZHPT, 26/03/09)

Technical change required to confirm name, address, update legal description (RC 16 March 09)  
Legal description: Pt Section 823 TN OF Christchurch (CT CB24B/335)

Information from Previous Database (6 August 2001):  
Info/Owner Details: legal desc should be Pt TS 823 CB24/334 & 24/335, tell VNZ, owner wrong also, see S114 stuff

Previous Classification: B - NZHPT paper HP 239/1991

Originally classified as "C", HP 191/1981as MLC Building (formerly NZ Express Co. Building)  
Duplicate record 1905 deleted BD1994/5/6. Listed as M.L.C. Building in Reg 1905

**NZHPT Branch:** Canterbury Branch

**File No National:**

**NZHPT Team:** Canterbury/West Coast Office (Sout

**File No Regional:** 12009-207

**Region:** Canterbury Region

**Web Page Status:** Level B

**Entry Written By:** Melanie Lovell-Smith

**Date Entry Completed:** 30 Aug 2001

**Nomination Received:**

**Date Owner Notified:**

**Owners, occupiers, nominators of registered place:**

Former Owner - Harlequin Properties Ltd, (Person ID: 6092) As At: 03 Oct 2001

Former Owner - Mrs Robin Watson, (Person ID: 6093) As At: 03 Oct 2001

Former Owner - Windsor Group Limited, (Person ID: 40038) As At: 03 Oct 2001

Owner - Victoria Regina Limited, (Person ID: 41168) As At: 10 May 2007

**Information Sources:**

Canterbury Times, 25 July 1906, p41

21 December 1910, p41

Cyclopedia Company, Industrial, descriptive, historical, biographical facts, figures, illustrations, Wellington, N.Z., 1897-1908, Vol. 4 Otago and Southland, Cyclopedia Company, Christchurch, 1905, p370

Ann McEwan, 'The Architecture of A.E. and E.S. Luttrell in Tasmania and New Zealand', MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 1988, pp.75-79

A. McEwan, From cottages to 'skyscrapers': the architecture of A.E. and E.S. Luttrell in Tasmania and New Zealand. M.A. Thesis, University of Canterbury. 1988, pp75-9

Progress, 1 June 1906, p197

Progress, 2 January 1907, pp87-8

Star Midweek, 31 October 1987, p6

Geoffrey Thornton, Cast in Concrete: Concrete Construction in New Zealand 1850-1939, Auckland, 1996, p.114

Weekly Press, 8 November 1905, p45

Press, 21 June 1906, p9

Paper No: HP 267/1991  
File No: HP 3/4  
Status: Decision

MINUTES OF THE 156TH ORDINARY MEETING OF THE NEW ZEALAND HISTORIC PLACES TRUST BOARD, HELD ON THURSDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 1991, AT THE GROSVENOR MOTOR INN, HAMILTON

(g) Proposed 'B' Classification: Former NZ Express Company Building, Christchurch (HP 239/1991)

RESOLVED: That the Former New Zealand Express Company Building, Christchurch, being a building which merits permanent preservation because of its very great architectural quality, be classified "B" under Section 35(1)(b) of the Historic Places Act 1980.

Moved: Deputy Chairperson  
Seconded: Ms S Reynolds

Extracts from the Board minutes of 19 September 1991 (HP 267/1991). Note that the Former New Zealand Express Company Building is the previous name for the Manchester Courts building.

### 5.3. Appendix 3: Evidence of Demolition



Manchester Courts shortly after earthquake on 4 September 2010 (Robyn Burgess, 7 September 2010, NZHPT)



Manchester Courts showing inspection of diagonal cracking on façade after earthquake of 4 September 2010 (Malcolm Duff, 26 September 2010, NZHPT)



Manchester Courts after commencement of demolition, as viewed from behind cordon on Hereford Street (Robyn Burgess, 25 November 2010, NZHPT)



'Dollhouse effect' of Manchester Courts during demolition (Robyn Burgess, early December 2010, NZHPT)



■ CANTERBURY EARTHQUAKE



Debris cleared: The Manchester Courts' site yesterday. Owner Richard Peebles says getting the roads open around the site has been his main focus.

Photo: JOHN KIRK-ANDERSON

Manchester Courts demolition, Press, 24 January 2011, A4.



Web cam image of the Manchester Courts site taken at 12.51pm on 22 February 2011, at the exact time of the 6.3 magnitude earthquake. (IOPEN Manchester Courts Demolition Cam <http://democam.ipon.co.nz/>)