

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT FOR SCHEDULED HERITAGE BUILDING:
FORMER W & E SCOULAR HOUSE



PROPERTY INFORMATION

Temporary 2GP Scheduled Heritage Building Reference No:	BX021
Address:	421 Highgate, Roslyn/Māori Hill, Dunedin
Building Name:	Former W & E Scoular house
Located within a Heritage Precinct:	No
HNZPT List Reference & Description:	N/A
Heritage Covenant:	No
Building Use at Time of Record:	Private residential
Condition of Property:	Building not known to be at risk due to condition

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT

Historic/Social	Meets criteria
Spiritual/Cultural	Does not meet criteria
Design	Meets criteria
Technological/Scientific	Meets criteria

RECOMMENDATION:

The building meets one or more of the significance criteria and is recommended for inclusion in Appendix A1.1 of the 2GP.

RECOMMENDED PROTECTION

[Tick]	Features	Details
✓	Building envelope	Entire external building envelope
✓	External/ancillary elements	Stone boundary wall and gates.
	Internal elements and/or rooms	Not considered as part of this desktop assessment. Owner may nominate interior elements for protection
	Excluded elements	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former Scoular house has heritage significance to Dunedin. Built in 1912-13 for William and Elizabeth Scoular, the house has historic value as the former home of a retired Clutha farmer and his family and architectural significance as an Edwardian Queen Anne style dwelling that retains a high level of authenticity and integrity and is a local landmark. The former Scoular house has technological significance for its innovative 'Ora Tonu' reinforced hollow-wall concrete construction system, which was devised by local designer and builder, James Annand.

The former Scoular House is comparable to scheduled heritage buildings within Dunedin of a similar type, period, and construction method. When compared with other scheduled buildings, the house meets the threshold to be included on the District Plan heritage schedule.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

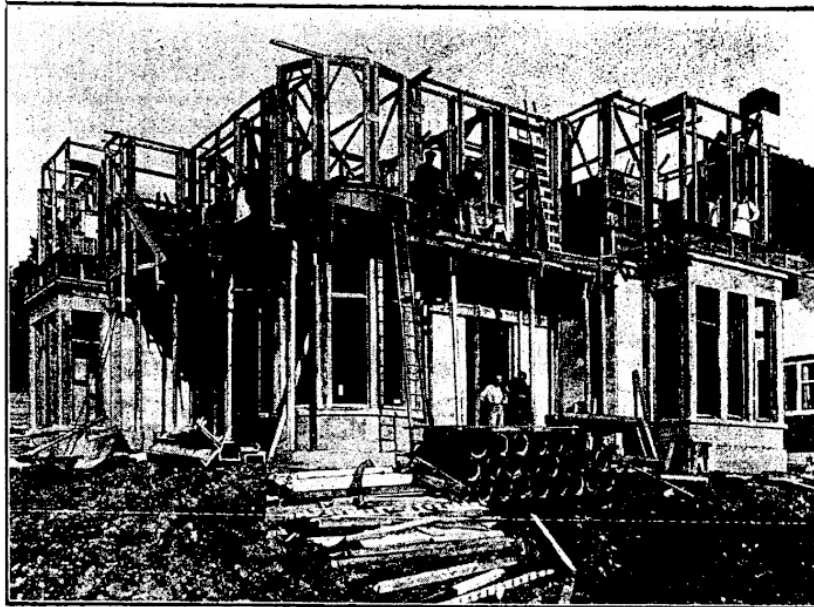
Architectural Period	Edwardian (1902-1914)
Style	Edwardian Queen Anne villa
Era/Date of Construction	1912-13
Architect/Designer/Builder	James Annand, designer/builder?
Historic Use & Cultural Associations	Home of Scoular family
Primary Construction Materials	Concrete, roughcast cement plaster, slate
Notable Architectural Characteristics	Concrete construction method, cast-iron lacework on return veranda/balcony, corner turret, period architectural decoration

Previous site development

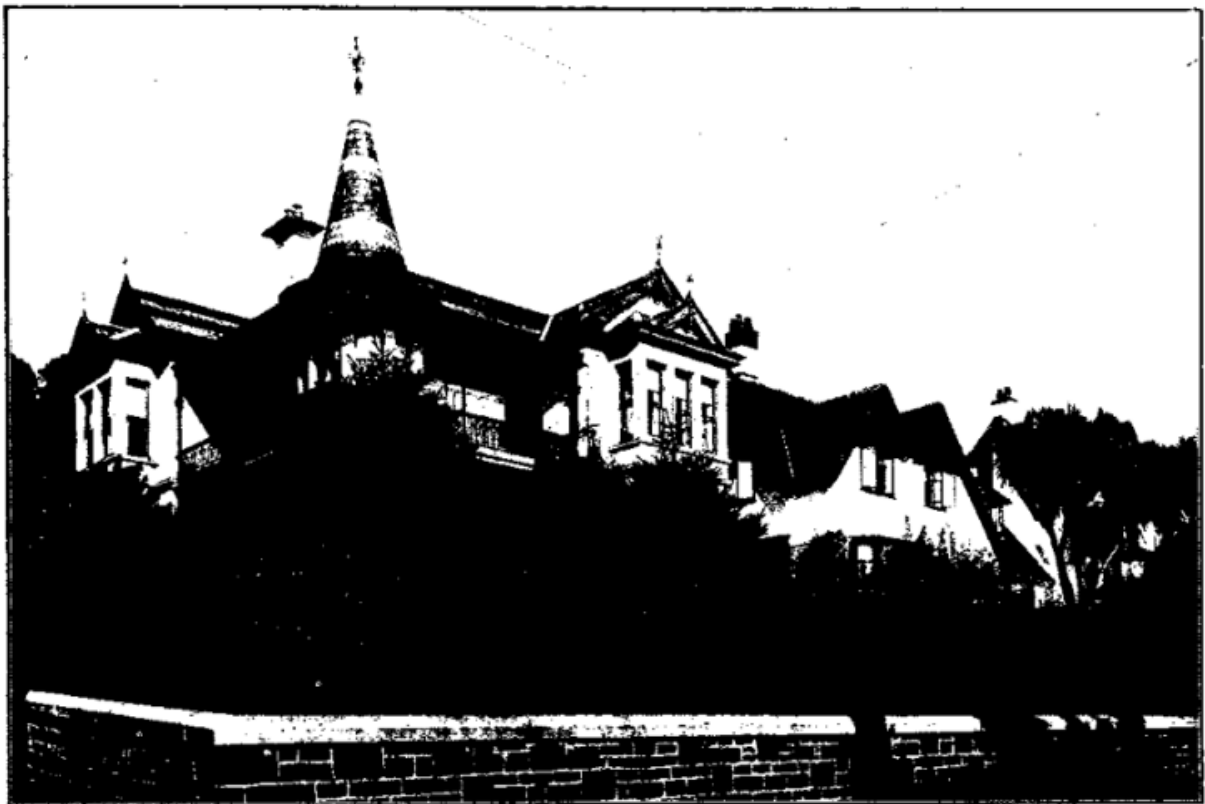
The 'Town of Bishopscourt' in the vicinity of Columba College was subdivided in 1908. Lot 1 of the subdivision was transferred to William Scoular in December 1911; the property appears to have been previously undeveloped.

House design and construction

The Scoular house at the corner of Highgate and Dunblane Street was erected in 1912-13. The building was featured in *Progress* during its construction and in an illustrated feature in the *Otago Witness* at the time of the NZ and South Seas Exhibition in 1925.



The house under construction. Progress 1 September 1913, p. 664. PapersPast



THE RESIDENCE OF MRS WM. SCOLAR, 175 HIGHGATE.

Otago Witness 8 September 1925, p. 41. PapersPast

Architectural drawings produced in 1960, when Mason & Wales undertook alterations to the interior, show the two storey, L-shaped building to have four main rooms on the ground floor, all opening off a central hall, with five bedrooms and a bathroom on the first floor. A single-story service wing at the rear (south) of the house is no longer extant, having been demolished at some time between 1985 and c.2005. The perimeter wall and entrance gates appear to be contemporary with the dwelling.

The 'Ora Tonu' reinforced hollow-wall concrete system used in this house is an example of James Annand's patented construction method that was used in Dunedin, Timaru, Balclutha and elsewhere in the 1910s. The former Scoular house shows this technology at use on a larger scale. The former Thomson house in Cumberland Street (1914) is a more modest, and therefore more typical, example of the Ora Tonu construction systems (Heritage NZPT historic place 4696).

Later history and development

William Scoular's estate offered the property for sale in 1934. DCC holds a plan for a proposed garage for Miss Gillies dated July 1936. Salmond & Burt designed a new garage and internal alterations for the Scott family in 1960. The house remains in residential use.

Notable people/Themes

William Scoular

William Scoular (1860-1922) died at his Roslyn home in early December 1922; he was survived by his wife Elizabeth (nee Calvert, died 1934) and five children. William was born in Dunedin and farmed at Waipahi in Clutha district before retiring to Roslyn and building the subject house. William Scoular was also the treasurer of Knox Church and of the Sustentation Committee of the Presbyterian Church of NZ.

James Annand

James Annand (died 1928) was a local designer and builder; he also served on the city council. Annand gave up his contracting business in February 1913, possibly to pursue his marketing of the Ora Tonu system. An article published in *Progress* in September 1913 described Annand's patented system and was accompanied by a photograph of the Scoular house in course of construction.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

HISTORIC/SOCIAL

The building demonstrates modest heritage values within this criterion. The house has historic value as the former home of William and Elizabeth Scoular, who were members of a prominent local family. The house also demonstrates the early 20th century residential development of Roslyn.

SPIRITUAL/CULTURAL

The building does not demonstrate heritage values within this criterion.

DESIGN

The building demonstrates heritage values within this criterion. The designer may have been James Annand, although he also worked with architectural firms such as Mason and Wales. The combination of an innovative building system with an historicist style of architecture is notable at this transitional period in New Zealand's architectural history.

TECHNOLOGICAL/SCIENTIFIC

The building demonstrates heritage values within this criterion. The patented concrete construction system used in the house is a notable example of an early 20th century innovation in residential production. The former Scoular house is also notable as a large-scale example of the usage of James Annand's construction system, given that such building methods and materials were typically used for more modest, single-storey dwellings.

REFERENCES

Scoular family:

Evening Star 4 December 1922, p. 6.

Otago Daily Times 4 December 1922, pp. 6 & 8; 4 October 1923, p. 14; 27 September 1934, p. 16.

Otago Witness 8 September 1925, p. 41.

Press 6 August 1934, p. 1.

<https://www.aucklandmuseum.com/war-memorial/online-cenotaph/record/C113203>

Ora Tonu construction system:

<https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/4696>

Progress 1 September 1913, pp. 664-665.

Otago Daily Times 6 February 1913, p. 12.

H Knight & N Wales *Buildings of Dunedin – An Illustrated Architectural Guide to New Zealand's Victorian City* John McIndoe, Dunedin, 1988, pp. 71-72.

Date Initial Assessment Completed	9 November 2022	Author	AM
Date Peer Reviewed	5 January 2023 - Updated to add information.	Reviewer	HB
Date Peer Reviewed	24 July 2024 -- Updated to add information.	Reviewer	MM
Date Confirmed Complete	24 July 2024 Revised 4 April 2025 to add information from PC1		

Photograph: DCC October 2022.



Appendix 1: Heritage New Zealand List Entry for Thomson Residence No. 4696



Heritage New Zealand
Pouhere Taonga

Thomson Residence (Former)

692 Cumberland Street, Dunedin North,
DUNEDIN

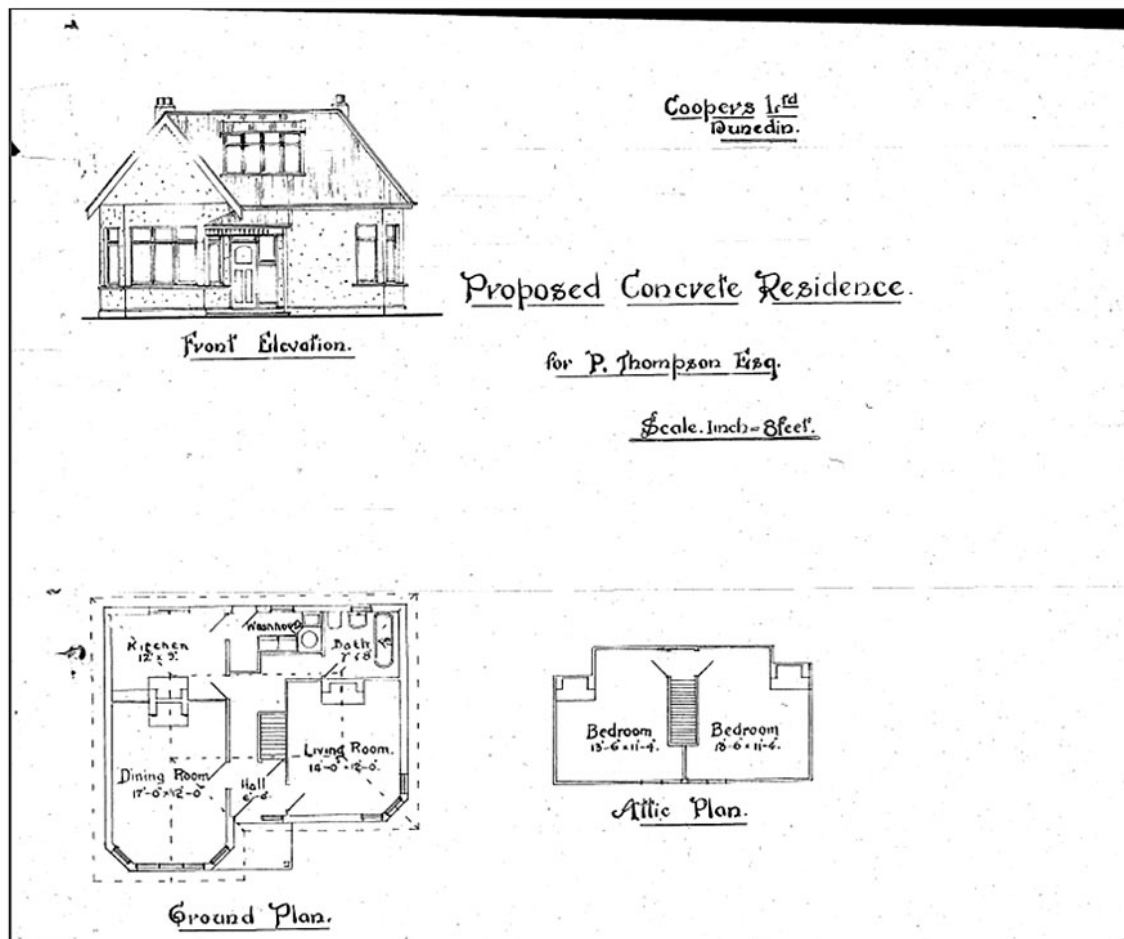
✓ Private

This modest English cottage-style concrete house was built in 1914 by Dunedin builders Coopers Ltd using Annand's patented Ora Tonu construction system, a local response to cheaper housing and use of new construction techniques. The use of concrete is unusual and represents an innovative use of reinforced concrete construction. The house, built for draper Hubert Parry Thomson (1885-1962), is largely hidden by greenery and obscured by University of Otago buildings. It has architectural, historical and technological significance, and is a significant surviving example of the reinforced hollow wall concrete building system.

Yorkshire-born Thomson learnt the draper's trade in London. He came to Dunedin in 1907, marrying Violet Scanlon in 1909, and they moved into their new house in 1914. Plans held by Dunedin City Council show a one-and-a-half storey, two-bedroom dwelling to be erected for 'P. Thompson' – possibly Mr Thomson went by his second name, Parry – and erected by Coopers, Ltd.

Coopers, Ltd was a family firm made up of Ashley Cooper and his two brothers under the direction of their father. The company prepared plans, specifications and quotations for building projects from 1914-1916. Cooper went on to build on his own behalf and established a joinery factory in the 1920s. Coopers, Ltd designed the house in English cottage style, with Arts and Crafts detailing and a roughcast exterior. The two upstairs bedrooms and downstairs kitchen, living, and dining rooms each had their own fireplaces. A bathroom and washhouse were located downstairs. The interior is notable for its timber joinery and tiled fireplaces.

Thomson became a commercial traveller (travelling salesman). He was also one of Dunedin's 'best-known cricket personalities', as a player and as an umpire of test matches. He was active in the community, being a member of the Amenities Society and the Domain Board at Karitane. Hubert Thomson lived in the house until his death in 1963. Violet Thomson continued to live in the house until her death in 1977, at the age of 92. In later years, the house was a rental property. In 2016, the now vacant house is owned and surrounded by University of Otago buildings.



Thomson Residence (Former), Dunedin. Plan provided courtesy of Dunedin City Council Archives. Dunedin City Council Building Permit 2940, Year 1914 | Dunedin City Council Archives

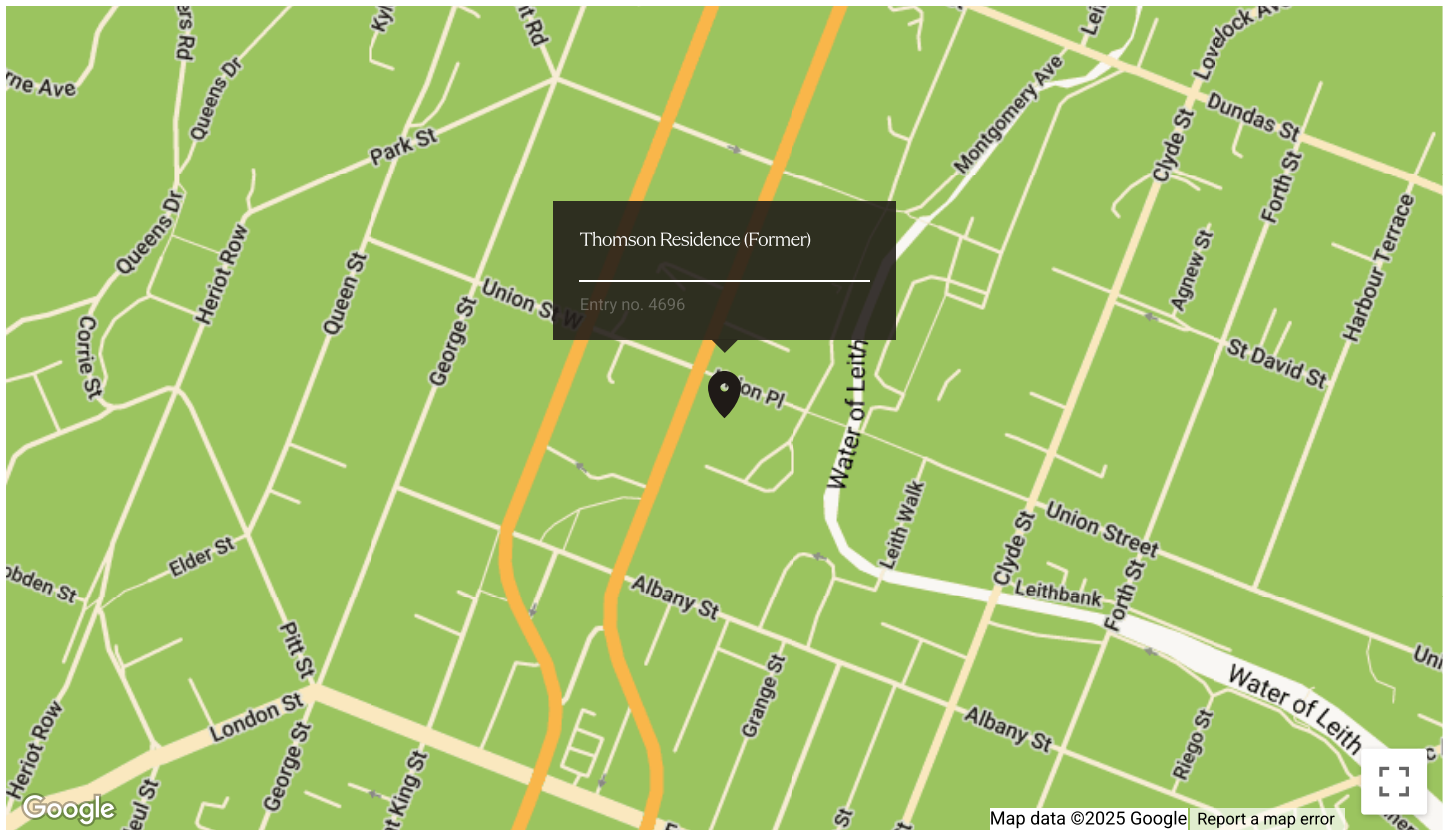


Thomson Residence (Former), Dunedin | Amanda Mulligan | 31/10/2014 | Heritage New Zealand



Thomson Residence (Former), Dunedin. November 1994 | Bruce Hall | Heritage New Zealand

Location



List Entry Information

Overview

Status

Listed

List Entry Status

Historic Place Category 2

Access

Private/No Public Access

List Number

4696

Date Entered

25th September 1986

Date of Effect

25th September 1986

City/District Council

Dunedin City

Region

Otago Region

Extent of List Entry

The extent includes the land described as Pt Sec 49 Blk XXIX Town of Dunedin (RT OT293/93), Otago Land District, and the building known as Thomson Residence (Former) thereon. (Refer to map in Appendix 1 of the List entry report for further information).

Legal description

Pt Sec 49 Blk XXIX Town of Dunedin (RT OT293/93), Otago Land District

Location Description

The house is located within the University of Otago campus boundary and is surrounded by university buildings.

Detailed List Entry

Significance

Historic Significance

Historical Significance or Value

Thomson's House represents the residential history of this area of North Dunedin that has largely been subsumed by the high-rise buildings associated with the University of Otago. It also represents the history of the development of building technologies in New Zealand in the early years of the twentieth century, and more generally the history of concrete construction in New Zealand.

Physical Significance

Architectural Significance or Value

The Thomson House has architectural significance as a relatively early example of a reinforced concrete house. It is built in English- cottage style, with modest Arts and Crafts detailing characteristic of the early twentieth century. The use of concrete could also be considered an appropriate expression of Arts and Crafts values, with its honesty and materiality.

Technological Significance or Value

The Thomson House has technological value in its adoption of a developing technology. The first decades of the twentieth century saw a proliferation of patents and an interest in developing technologies such as reinforced concrete. The use of new technologies took place in the context of a search for building methods and materials that could be used for affordable but durable housing. Thomson's House fits into the story of the development of technologies and the use of new techniques, as evidenced by the advertising for Ora Tonu emphasising durability and affordability. The use of the patent makes the house a significant example of Annand's patent system, and represents an innovation in ferroconcrete construction.

Detail Of Assessed Criteria

(a) The extent to which the place reflects important or representative aspects of New Zealand history

Thomson's House represents the experimentation with new building technologies, important in the early years of the twentieth century. Thomson's House, specifically the use of the developing technology of reinforced concrete in the early twentieth century, represents the search for a building material that was affordable and long lasting, as well as earthquake resistant. This period saw a number of patents for reinforced concrete as builders experimented with this new method, to produce low-cost housing for the low and middle classes, at a time when timber was getting more expensive, and the cost of building in brick was prohibitive for lower income earners.

(g) The technical accomplishment, value, or design of the place

Thomson's House represents the innovative and experimental use of ferroconcrete construction. It is an example of a technology patented by Dunedin builder James Annand in 1912 (and for which builders Coopers, Ltd, were

agents). It is one of some six concrete houses built by Coopers in the period from 1914 to around 1919. This technique was used for a limited number of buildings in Otago, Southland and Canterbury, as well as some North Island centres.

(k) The extent to which the place forms part of a wider historical and cultural area

Thomson's House is part of the residential landscape of North Dunedin, one that was characteristic of this area until the mid-1960s, when the University of Otago's high rise science buildings and the spread of other campus facilities resulted in the demolition of many of the residences. Along with two nearby villas and a block of flats from the 1930s, the house is a reminder of the character of the area for much of the twentieth century.

Construction Professional

Biography

Ashley Cooper (1881-1963) was born in Timaru and grew up in Australia. At the turn of the century, he returned to New Zealand with his two brothers. The Cooper brothers came to Dunedin and began to work as builders, under the direction of their father. The brothers then went their separate ways. Ashley Cooper continued to work as a builder. He bought a farm at Andersons Bay and subdivided it, building many of the homes in the subdivision bounded by Hunt, Oakland and Duckworth Streets. In the 1920s he set up a joinery factory. He was interested in the possibilities of prefabricated buildings and recognised the need for standardised joinery. He ran the business until 1962 when he finally retired in his eighties. Cooper died in Dunedin in November 1963. Source: List Entry Review Report for Thomson Residence, Dunedin, Register No. 4696, 20 Sept 2016

Name

Coopers Ltd

Type

Builder

Biography

Ashley Cooper (1881-1963) was born in Timaru and grew up in Australia. At the turn of the century, he returned to New Zealand with his two brothers. The Cooper brothers came to Dunedin and began to work as builders, under the direction of their father. The brothers then went their separate ways. Ashley Cooper continued to work as a builder. He bought a farm at Andersons Bay and subdivided it, building many of the homes in the subdivision bounded by Hunt, Oakland and Duckworth Streets. In the 1920s he set up a joinery factory. He was interested in the possibilities of prefabricated buildings and recognised the need for standardised joinery. He ran the business until 1962 when he finally retired in his eighties. Cooper died in Dunedin in November 1963. Source: List Entry Review Report for Thomson Residence, Dunedin, Register No. 4696, 20 Sept 2016

Name

Coopers Ltd

Type

Designer

Construction Details

Description

Addition to dwelling (details not known)

Start Year

1927

Type

Addition

Start Year

1914

Type

Original Construction

Construction Materials

Concrete, timber, glass, corrugated iron, galvanised wire reinforcing

Historical Narrative

Kāi Tahu whanui comprise people of Kāi Tahu, Ngāti Mamoe and Waitaha descent, who hold manawhenua over an area that covers the entire Otago region including the area around Ōwheo (Leith River) and Ōpoho where the land for disposal is located. The Ōwheo was named after the Waitaha chief, Wheo. Several centuries of continuous Maori occupation preceded the arrival of the Europeans in Otago Harbour. Ara Tawhito (traditional travelling routes) crossed the landscape providing annual and seasonal pathways to permanent pā sites and temporary kāinga. The bays and inlets of the Otago Harbour, along the coast of Otago Peninsula and south to Taieri Mouth were popular sites for settlements.

There were numerous mahinga kai sites where Ngāi Tahu gathered natural resources from the network of springs, waterways, wetlands, grasslands and forests that abounded along the rivers and estuaries. The attributes of shelter, easy access to fishing grounds, and bush-clad hills with an abundance of bird life, building material and edible vegetation available in the ngahere (forest) and repo (swamp), complemented the strong kaimoana resource that abounded. In the Otago area, the verdant forests were well known and particularly dense. The rivers teemed with tuna, kōkopu, kanakana and inaka, the wetlands were a good supply of wading birds and fibres for weaving and food, with the forest supplying kererū, tūī and other fauna as well as building materials.

North Dunedin

North Dunedin developed as a residential area. Photographs show a mix of housing, from small worker's dwellings to more substantial two storey villas, as well as blocks of terrace housing. Around the Cumberland Street/Union Street block there was a mix of single and double-storey villas, with the prominent buildings being the Otago Museum on neighbouring Great King Street, and the Teacher's College and Dunedin Technical School. The University buildings were a block further east on the other side of the Water of Leith, but throughout the twentieth century, the university expanded across the Water of Leith, resulting in the demolition of many of the residential buildings characteristic of this part of Dunedin. The block to the north, where the science blocks now stand, was more densely packed housing.

Building Hubert Thomson's House

Hubert Thomson's house, close to the intersection of Union and Cumberland Streets, was typical of the scale of these residences (this block had a row of two storey houses) but not typical in its construction material. Most nearby villas were built of timber.

This English cottage-style concrete house was built in 1914 by Coopers, Ltd, for draper Hubert Parry Thomson (1885-1962), in a residential area close to the centre of Dunedin. Yorkshire-born Thomson learnt the draper's trade in London. He came to Dunedin in 1907. He married Violet Scanlon in 1909, and they moved to their new house in 1914. Plans held by Dunedin City Council show a one-and-a-half storey, two-bedroom dwelling to be erected for 'P. Thompson' – possibly Mr Thomson went by his second name, Parry.

Coopers Ltd was a family firm made up of Ashley Cooper and his two brothers under the direction of their father. The company prepared plans, specifications and quotations for building projects from 1914-1916. Cooper went on to build on his own behalf and established a joinery factory in the 1920s.

Concrete Construction

Reinforced concrete

Concrete as a building material became more common after 1900, by which time a regular supply of cement was available with the formation of the New Zealand Portland Cement Company. As a building material, concrete is strong in compression but performs poorly under tension. The first moves towards a solution that anticipated modern reinforced concrete was patented in 1854 when English builder William Wilkinson used iron cables under tension in his concrete dwellings. In New Zealand too, there were experiments with steel reinforcing, reportedly the first being an 1883 water tower at the former Addington Railway Workshops in Christchurch.

Building scientist Nigel Isaacs writes that the early 1900s saw a number of systems designed to improve the performance of concrete as a building material – including Konka, Fabricona, Pearse's Patent and Ora Tonu. The search for solutions was pushed along by events such as Wellington's 1904 earthquake, which saw architects such as James Chapman Taylor turn to concrete to provide new building methods. Arts and Crafts exponents argued that 'rugged concrete exteriors and interiors that were whitewashed and left in their raw state, exemplified the simple and early English vernacular.'

Concrete was at the 'forefront of the construction issues,' the charge being led by Progress magazine, further pushed along by the 1907 San Francisco earthquake, promoting ferroconcrete construction – that is reinforced concrete. Concrete patents for a wide range of products were advertised in Progress.

Houses like Chapman Taylor's first concrete house, Whare Ra (1913-1916), represented an innovative use of reinforced concrete construction, using the traditional English cottage form. Chapman Taylor argued that 'the economic and low maintenance values and the inherent qualities of the material combined to avoid "ruinous destruction" and ensured permanence.' He argued that 'permanent homes' would allow the country to establish a national consciousness and identity.

Ora Tonu

James Annand was a Dunedin builder and local body politician. He was also something of an inventor. In 1911, Annand applied for a patent for a concrete building system. He was also involved in speculative building for in that same year he advertised for sale a house in Rosebery Street, Mornington, a 5-roomed cottage 'built in concrete, everlasting' that needed no repairs. He named this system 'Ora Tonu' – a name in Te Reo that refers to enduring health, presumably a comment on the lack of maintenance required for his concrete houses.

Annand's efforts were part of a homegrown impulse to develop building systems for concrete, as technologies advanced. Nigel Isaacs writes that while concrete block systems grew out of the masonry tradition, monolithic and then later, reinforced concrete, grew out of the tradition of pisé or rammed earth.

Isaacs writes that the 'Oratonu Patent Concrete Company' advertised its product as 'absolutely damp proof' and low maintenance. The product was used for government housing in Timaru in 1914, where 10 workmen's dwellings were constructed. To date, the last reference found to the system was from the Secretary of Labour addressing the 1919 'First New Zealand Town-Planning Conference and Exhibition'. He referred to the fire-resisting properties of the system.

In 1912, the Clutha Leader ran a story on Annand's system – which offered 'economy, durability, comfort and attractiveness in appearance.' The paper described the construction method: the foundations were laid as usual in brick or concrete, with a damp proof course and ventilation to prevent damp. Two outer walls were built at the same time – two inches of concrete, then five inches of air space, and another two inches of concrete, the walls interlaced at intervals of 18 inches [46 centimetres] with galvanised wire. The outer walls could be roughcast or plastered smooth. The interior walls could be finished in a single coat of plaster, then match-lined or papered as

desired. For picture hanging and other interior decoration, hardwood battens were embedded in the walls. The internal walls were solid and some three inches thick. For a multi-storey building, the walls would be thicker and stronger.

The boxing for the concrete was made in sections and had to be well fitting and smooth to create an even surface. Annand's plant was moveable from building to building, and various designs for boxing were used depending on the style of building. Chimneys were also concrete, with large drain pipes used for their inside lining. The plant allowed for rows of concrete to be laid continuously, with the boxing removed when the concrete was sufficiently dry. The price of the building, calculated to include transport costs to Balclutha, turned out to be 'very considerably less' than brick and about ten percent greater than wood. Builder D.T. Fleming was responsible for adopting the system in Balclutha. Annand's contract included all foundations, walls, partitions, and chimneys, with all exteriors finished in rough-cast and windows and door frames built in. The Balclutha houses were modest – three houses with six to eight rooms. Fleming's foreman, a Mr Minn, pronounced that the Ora Tonu system should 'put wooden houses out of the running here, as unless for jerry-built house he affirms that concrete will compete with wood on nearly, if not altogether, equal terms.' Minn believed that concrete also reflected the more permanent and established nature of Balclutha's growing settlement.

By 1913, Annand had agents for his patented process and had captured some media attention. The Timaru Herald reported that with the 'ever increasing cost' of timber, concrete offered a cheaper alternative. Annand had, the Timaru Herald wrote, overcome the problem of dampness that had been a drawback of using solid concrete. Annand's method made for a house that was about the same price as timber, and cheaper than brick. Anderson and Brown were Annand's Timaru agents and they offered to supply designs and estimates for 'any class of building from a cottage to a sky-scraper, and [would] be pleased to show those intending to build, photographs of many fine buildings already erected by this process.' Annand's Christchurch agent was T.L. Flaus, who advertised that there was a house being built in Princess Street in Lower Riccarton.

Unfortunately, Annand was taken ill and could not promote his business. But despite the lack of promotion, five or six houses were built in Dunedin, 'quite a number' in Christchurch, a house for Dr Church on his Balfour farm, and several in Invercargill and other parts of Southland, as well as the Timaru dwellings noted above. Isaacs writes that Annand closed his contracting business in 1913.

An article describing Ora Tonu appeared in N.Z. Building Progress in September 1913. The article reported that Annand had completed four buildings using his system and was in the process of building a two storey house in Roslyn, with an image of the partially complete house. Annand was still advertising his concrete houses for sale in 1919, presumably built with his system, and furnished with all the modern conveniences. Annand died in 1928.

In Dunedin, Annand's agents were Coopers, Ltd – who advertised themselves as 'architects and builders', and from their Princes Street premises conducted their business that also included being house, land and estate agents. They advertised the 'Oratonu' system in July 1914, praising its easy care, the resulting low insurance premiums and maintenance costs, as well as the even temperature of the houses.

Coopers seem to have adopted Annand's system with some enthusiasm. Dunedin City Council Building Registers record around six houses built of concrete by Coopers from 1914-18. Some of these houses still survive, and they are modest residences in Caversham, Forbury, and South Dunedin. All are single storey and tend to a simple bungalow style. Earlier houses built by the firm were timber or wood.

Isaacs does not have a clear idea why the system was not adopted more widely, but considers that it may be 'related to the inability of the inventor to actively promote it, the thermal or moisture benefits, or the comparative cost.' The proceedings of the first New Zealand town-planning conference and exhibition in 1919 discuss the

comparative costs of building systems, including Ora Tonu. F.W. Rowley, the Secretary of Labour, presented a paper on 'The Housing Problem: Homes for Workers' in which he discussed the ability to construct 'dwellings in a wholesale fashion instead of one at a time, and thereby to considerably reduce the cost.' Rowley's paper explained that the Department of Labour was investigating several building systems – and mentions Ora Tonu – in the interests of cost-saving and efficiency in erecting large numbers of worker's houses.

There were doubts about the concrete technology, with government architect John Campbell writing '[w]e hear a great deal nowadays of concrete and ferroconcrete as a housing material, and the systems patented for use of these materials are innumerable and mostly faulty. Concrete building is much more expensive than wood, and in my opinion is likely to remain so for a long time to come. There are flimsy methods of concrete construction that are not safe to follow – in Wellington, at least. Monolithic concrete is very subject to temperature cracks, and in some thin-wall systems I would doubt its behaviour in severe earthquake-shocks. It is better to use brick where it can be obtained.'

Thomson's House

This house was built for Hubert Parry Thomson and was his family home. Thomson became a commercial traveller (travelling salesman). He was also one of Dunedin's 'best-known cricket personalities', as a player and as an umpire of test matches. He was active in the community being a member of the Amenities Society and the Domain Board at Karitane. Hubert Thomson lived in the house until his death in 1963. Violet Thomson continued to live in the house until her death in 1977, at the age of 92.

Coopers Ltd designed the house in Arts and Craft style, with timber joinery with a stuccoed exterior. The bedrooms were upstairs. Downstairs were the living and dining rooms, kitchen, washhouse and bathroom. The bedrooms, kitchen, living and dining rooms had their own fireplaces. The interior is notable for its timber joinery and tiled fireplaces.

A Changing Streetscape

In the 1930s, some of the villas on Union Street were replaced by a substantial block of brick flats. In the 1960s, the science buildings replaced many of the villas on Union and Cumberland Streets. In 1970, Smithell's Gym was built on the section to the south of Thomson's residence. The Union Building opened to the rear in the 1960s, with the rear of the residence backing onto the Union Lawn. As architect and engineer Geoffrey Thornton has noted, Thomson's house was 'swallowed but not digested, by the University of Otago high-rise development.'

As late as 2013, the house remained a private residence, surrounded by University of Otago buildings. Since the University of Otago purchased the house, it has largely remained unused. In 2016, Thomson's former residence remains obscurely tucked into the trees among the university buildings.

Physical Description

Current Description Setting Thomson's House is set within the University of Otago campus. Immediately to the south, and largely obscuring the house is Smithell's Gymnasium, a large brick structure. Behind the house on the south is the Union Lawn, while behind and to the east are two storey villas. To the north east is a temporary prefabricated building. To the north is the house's garden with the shrubbery also concealing the property. The Thomson House's one and a half storey design was consistent with its original neighbouring two storey building. Thomson's residence is an English-style cottage, with Arts and Crafts style elements. It is built of hollow wall reinforced concrete, using the patented Ora Tonu method that involved a hollow wall system and galvanised wire hoop reinforcing with shuttered concrete. The exterior has been rough cast. The house has a corrugated iron roof and timber joinery. The interior walls are solid concrete. Architectural historian Richard Lawrence writes that the 'cottage style' was the predominant Edwardian style in domestic architecture, and its 'vernacular forms' were consistent with the Arts and Crafts style, and that Arts and Crafts formed the biggest influence on Edwardian interiors. In modest homes, fireplaces were smaller than earlier architectural styles and staircases were important features of the interior – both these features are notable in Thomson's residence. Wallpapers tended to be in natural colours, where the natural colour of the paper pulp formed the final surface, and it was common to use friezes. Friezes are used in Thomson's residence. The use of concrete and the association with Arts and Crafts is interesting. While some Arts and Crafts practitioners argued that the use of traditional materials and techniques were central to the Arts and Crafts philosophy, others like Boston architect Herbert Warren was interested in the use of new materials and technologies, and felt that the use of concrete (with its durability and high quality) was consistent with the use of 'fine materials promoted by Arts and Crafts theorists and designers.' The first decades of the twentieth century saw a proliferation of patents and an interest in developing technologies represented by the Progress magazine and its focus on emerging technologies and commercial outlets for these. It was, according to architectural and design historian Michael Findlay, a time where there was an interest in affordable housing. Thomson's House fits into the story of the development of technologies and the use of new techniques, as evidenced by the advertising for Ora Tonu emphasising durability and affordability. Findlay also posits a reason for the short-lived use of the patent, noting that such patents were hard to enforce because once builders saw the method, they made their own adjustments, so individualising the technology, and adjusting the method to suit the project. The use of the patent, he argues, make the house a relatively rare survivor representing innovation in these early years of reinforcing technology. An architectural assessment by the University's Strategic Architect, Murray Goldfinch (FNZIA BArch NZCD) advises that: 'While the building provides a good example of a time and style of architecture, Dunedin enjoys other better and more important examples elsewhere in the city. The cottage was designed as a modest residence in the Arts & Craft style, it would have represented a very modern and fresh style in its day, it is well proportioned, but not unique...The building has suffered from alterations to the main entrance, façade fenestration and some internal elements, and has significant structural issues.' Goldfinch describes the building as unreinforced concrete and notes that this is unusual for the period. Subsequent investigations confirm that the house is built according to Annand's system, with external walls being hollow, with hooped ties connecting the two concrete skins. Goldfinch notes that there is cracking, showing on both the exterior and interior of the respective walls. These principle load bearing walls, however, remain generally level and true. The surrounding finished ground level about the residence has risen over the years leaving the floor essentially at ground level. This has compromised significantly the subfloor framing and piles of the cottage. 'The interior retains many original internal elements in good condition, such as wood panelling, fireplace surrounds, lights and decorative metalwork. These elements remain as a record of the art and building tectonic of the period.' **Comparative Analysis** The Thomson residence is one of several Dunedin examples of Annand's Ora Tonu patented construction method. It is the only one scheduled on the Dunedin City District Plan. Other similar examples are houses on Burnett Street in Caversham, and on Oxford Street in South Dunedin. Like Thomson's Residence these are modest houses, although of bungalow or transitional villa/bungalow style. There are likely other examples in Mornington, though the location of these has not been identified. There are other examples in Timaru, including a group of around ten houses on

Melton Street that were built as worker's dwellings. On a much grander scale is the two storey residence on the corner of Dunblane Street and Highgate in Maori Hill, Dunedin. This house was built for merchant and importer of William Scoular of Messrs Scoular and Co and is shown in Figure 2 above. Thomson's House has technological and architectural significance as an example of Annand's Ora Tonu patented construction system. While not a grand house, like 421 Highgate, it is a representative example of the modest dwellings constructed using this system.

Reference

Completion Date

20th September 2016

Report Written By

Heather Bauchop and Jonathan Howard

Information Sources

Evening Star

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Otago Daily Times

Otago Daily Times, 1 Jun 1915, p.10.

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Report Written By

A fully referenced New Zealand Heritage List report is available on request from Otago/Southland Area Office of Heritage New Zealand.

Please note that entry on the New Zealand Heritage List/Rarangi Korero identifies only the heritage values of the property concerned, and should not be construed as advice on the state of the property, or as a comment of its soundness or safety, including in regard to earthquake risk, safety in the event of fire, or insanitary conditions.

Further Information

Current Usages

Uses: Education

Specific Usage: Misc

Former Usages

General Usage:: Accommodation

Specific Usage: House

Themes

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