

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT FOR SCHEDULED HERITAGE BUILDING:
SUSSEX HOTEL (FORMER)



Photograph: Built in Dunedin

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Current 2GP CCB Reference No:	CC048
Temporary 2GP Scheduled Heritage Building Reference No:	BX107
Address	140 George Street, Dunedin
Located within a Heritage Precinct	George Street Commercial Heritage Precinct
HNZPT List Reference & Description	N/A
Heritage Covenant	No
Building Use at Time of Record	Commercial
Condition of Property	Not known to be at risk because of condition

HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT

Historic/Social	Meets criteria
Spiritual/Cultural	Does not meet criteria
Design	Meets criteria
Technological/Scientific	Does not meet 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	Façade to George Street excluding fibre cement roof cladding
	External/ancillary elements	
	Internal elements and/or rooms	Not considered as part of this desktop assessment. Owner may nominate interior elements for protection
✓	Excluded elements	Fibre cement roof cladding

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The former Sussex Hotel, designed by Robert Forrest and built in 1880 for Thomas Oliver, has heritage significance to Dunedin. The building has historic significance as a prominent central city hotel, later Wardell's grocery store, and later as a venue for significant physical culture and dance studios. It has design significance as the work of notable Dunedin architect Robert Forrest and as a Victorian hotel in the central city. The building retains a good level of architectural integrity and makes a strong architectural contribution to George Street

The former Sussex Hotel is comparable to scheduled heritage buildings within Dunedin of a similar type and period. When compared with other scheduled buildings, it meets the threshold to be included on the district plan heritage schedule.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Architectural Period	Victorian (1838-1901)
Style	Italian Renaissance Revival
Era/Date of Construction	1880 1908 (additions) 1936 (additions)
Architect/Designer/Builder	Robert Forrest (original architect) Luttrell Bros (architects for 1908 additions) Miller & White (architects for 1936 additions) John Brennan (original builder)
Historic Use & Cultural Associations	Hotel, commercial retail, offices
Primary Construction Materials	Rendered masonry, timber window joinery
Notable Architectural Characteristics:	Renaissance Revival façade, curved corner at the entrance to Blacket Lane, roof concealed by parapet.

Previous Site Development

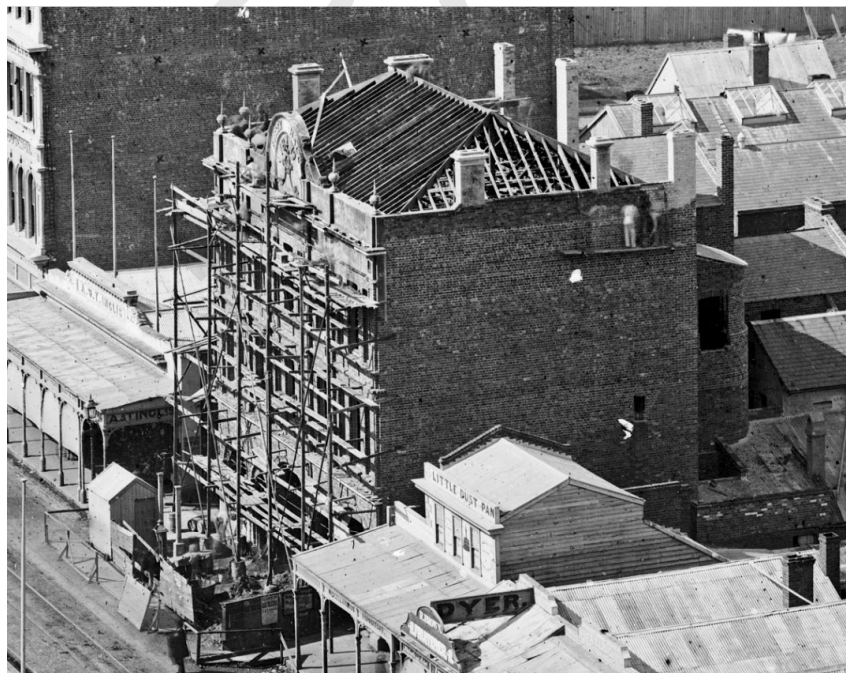
George Street was laid out according to the 1840s survey plan of Charles Kettle. Early commercial development of the Dunedin settlement focused south of the Octagon. By 1860 the southern part of George Street was also a busy commercial strip, although the buildings were smaller and more likely to be of timber construction. Typically, they were shops with dwellings above, or public houses. More intensified development came after the demolition of Bell Hill, begun in 1862.

The first hotel building at 140 George Street was the wooden Sussex Hotel of 1865-1880.

Design and Construction

The front portion of the present building was built for Thomas Oliver in 1880 as the Sussex Hotel. It was licensed until 1903. The architect was Robert Forrest, who is particularly known for his hotel and brewery designs. The builder was Robert Brennan. The building was unusual for George Street in being three-storeys (rather than two) in height. The facade was completed in the Renaissance Revival style, with massive pilasters running between the top two floors, and an unusual, curved corner at the entrance to Blacket Lane. There were originally more mouldings than there are now, as well as an arched pediment and finials prominent on the parapet. Although the pediment and applied decoration have been removed, the façade still reads in essentially its original form.

On the top floor was originally the Sussex Hall. This had room for 200 people, and events held there in the 1880s included dinners, concerts, dances, workers' meetings, election meetings, wrestling matches, and boxing classes.

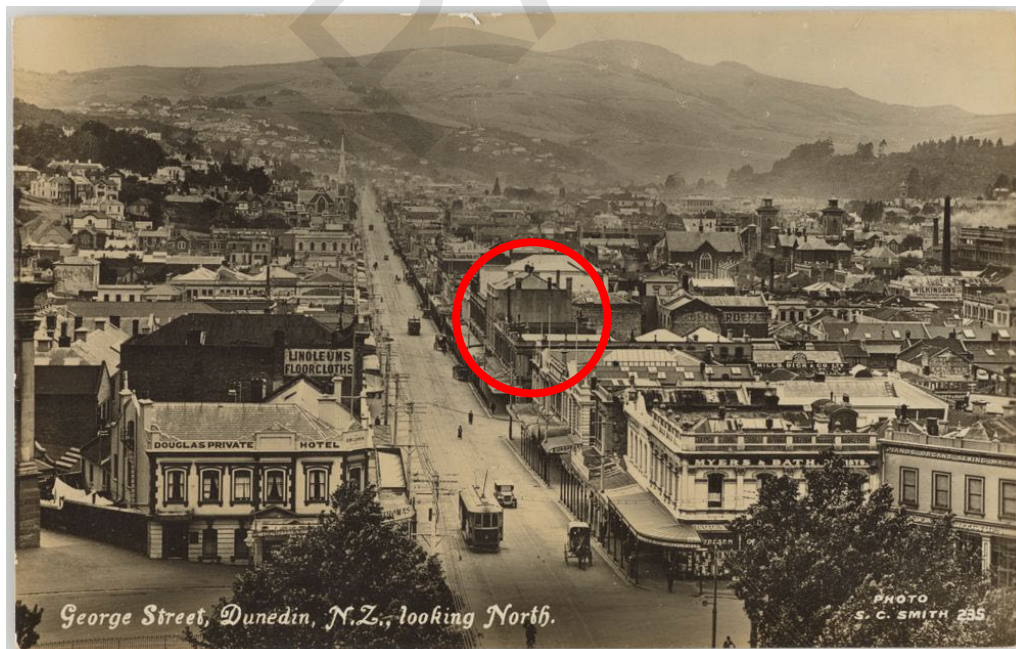


The subject building under construction;

https://builtindunedin.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/sussex_1880b.jpg



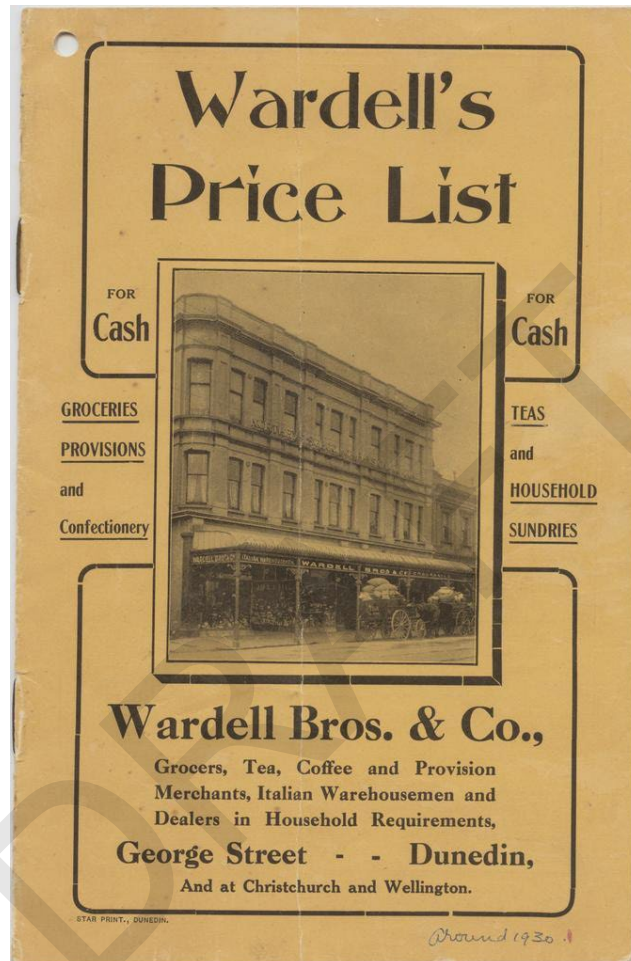
An 1890s view of George Street with the subject building circled prior to alterations to the parapet. From Town Hall belfry, looking north (1890s). Hocken Digital Collections, accessed 06/08/2024, <https://hocken.recollect.co.nz/nodes/view/11618>



An image of George Street 1900-1910 showing the subject building circled. George Street, Dunedin, New Zealand, looking North, 1900-1910, Dunedin, by Sydney Smith. Gift of Patricia M. Mitchell, 1989. Te Papa (PS.000638)

Later Development

The building was associated with Wardells grocery store 1907-1979. This was the largest store of its type in Dunedin, known for its free home delivery service, and for stocking products not available elsewhere, such as specialty cheeses.



An image of the building from a 1930 Wardells Price List; Wardells (Dunedin) Limited, Cover page of Wardells price list (c.1930). Hocken Digital Collections, accessed 06/08/2024, <https://hocken.recollect.co.nz/nodes/view/45453>

The building was associated with physical culture schools 1901-1953, most of this time run by J.P. Northey.

Dance studios operated in the building from the 1950s through to the 1980s. Shona Dunlop-MacTavish ran one of the first modern dance studios in New Zealand, and other instructors and groups included Laura Bain, Lily Stevens, Serge Bousloff (formerly of the Borovansky Ballet), Helen Wilson, Robinson School of Ballroom Dancing, the Ballet School, Southern Cross Scottish Country Dancing Club, Otago Dance Centre (Glenys Kindley and Alex Gilchrist), and Meenan's School of Ballet. The New Edinburgh Folk Club also had its first rooms in the building.

From 1979 a succession of appliance stores operated from the retail space formerly occupied by Wardells. These were Kelvinator House, Wilson Neil Appliances, and Noel Leeming. In 1995 the Champions of Otago sports bar opened at the rear of the ground floor, and in 2006 this was replaced by Fever Club, a 1970s disco-themed bar.



The building showing signage advertising 'Northeys School of Physical Culture' and 'J.R' McKenzie (on the verandah); <https://builtindunedin.com/tag/hotels/#jp-carousel-5072>

Notable People/Themes

Robert Forrest

The architect was Robert Forrest (c.1832-1919). Scottish-born Forrest arrived in Dunedin in 1862. He was a student at the Dunedin School of Art, studying architecture under David Hutton. He worked both as a contractor and as an architect, designing a number of significant buildings, including many hotels, and private residences. His other hotel designs include City Hotel, the Excelsior, St Kilda, Green Island, and Outram.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

HISTORIC/SOCIAL

The building demonstrates heritage values within this criterion. The former Sussex Hotel has historic and social significance as a prominent nineteenth century city centre hotel, for its association with Wardell's grocery store, and as a venue for significant dance schools and other clubrooms. It is also significant for its association with notable nineteenth century Dunedin architect Robert Forrest who was known for his hotel designs.

SPIRITUAL/CULTURAL

The building does not demonstrate heritage values within this criterion.

DESIGN

The building demonstrates heritage values within this criterion. Designed by notable nineteenth century Dunedin architect Robert Forrest it is an example of a Victorian hotel in the central city. Although the façade of the former Sussex Hotel has been altered from Forrest's original design, the building retains a good level of architectural integrity and makes a strong architectural contribution to George Street.

TECHNOLOGICAL/SCIENTIFIC

The building does not demonstrate heritage values within this criterion.

REFERENCES

For further detail, and for historical references, see Built in Dunedin blog post, 31 May 2015, at:
<https://builtin.dunedin.com/2015/05/31/sussex-hotel/>

<https://digitalnz.org/>

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Date Peer Reviewed	6 August 2024	Reviewer	MM
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