

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT FOR SCHEDULED HERITAGE BUILDING:
SANTA SABINA CONVENT (FORMER)



PROPERTY INFORMATION

Temporary 2GP Scheduled Heritage Building Reference No:	BX058
Address:	16-18/73 Buccleugh Street
Located within a Heritage Precinct:	No
HNZPT List Reference & Description:	N/A. Nominated for listing.
Heritage Covenant:	No
Building Use at Time of Record:	Residential
Condition of Property:	Not known to be at risk because of condition

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT

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

RECOMMENDATION:

The building meets one or more of the significance criteria Policy 2.4.2.1.b and is recommended for inclusion in Appendix A1.1 of the 2GP.

RECOMMENDED PROTECTION

[Tick]	Features	Details
✓	Building envelope	Entire external building envelope of the former convent only
	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	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1929 to a design by Mandeno and Fraser, the former Santa Sabina Convent is a landmark building overlooking North East Valley. It has architectural significance as an interwar ecclesiastical building designed by a significant Dunedin architectural practice. It has a historic and cultural association with the Dominican Sisters who lived and worked there from 1929-1988, and with the Catholic community of North East Valley.

Santa Sabina is comparable to scheduled heritage buildings within Dunedin with a similar history. When compared with other scheduled buildings, it meets the threshold to be included on the district plan heritage schedule.

HISTORIC SUMMARY

Architectural Period	Interwar (1918-1939)
Style	Described as 'Modern Gothic' at the time it was built.
Era/Date of Construction	1929
Architect/Designer/Builder	Mandeno and Fraser (architectural partnership)
Historic Use & Cultural Associations	Dominican convent
Primary Construction Materials	Concrete and masonry, slate roofing, steel framed windows
Notable Architectural Characteristics	Gables, tower, elevated setting, decorative cruciforms.

Brief History

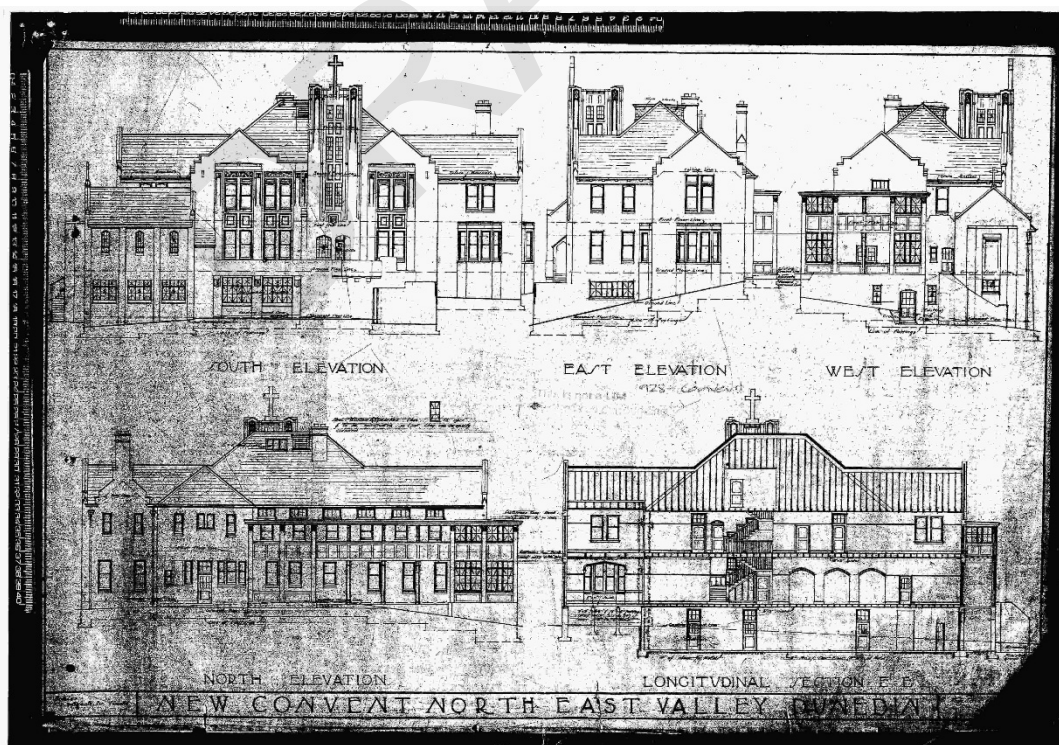
Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga's brief history is reproduced in an edited form below:

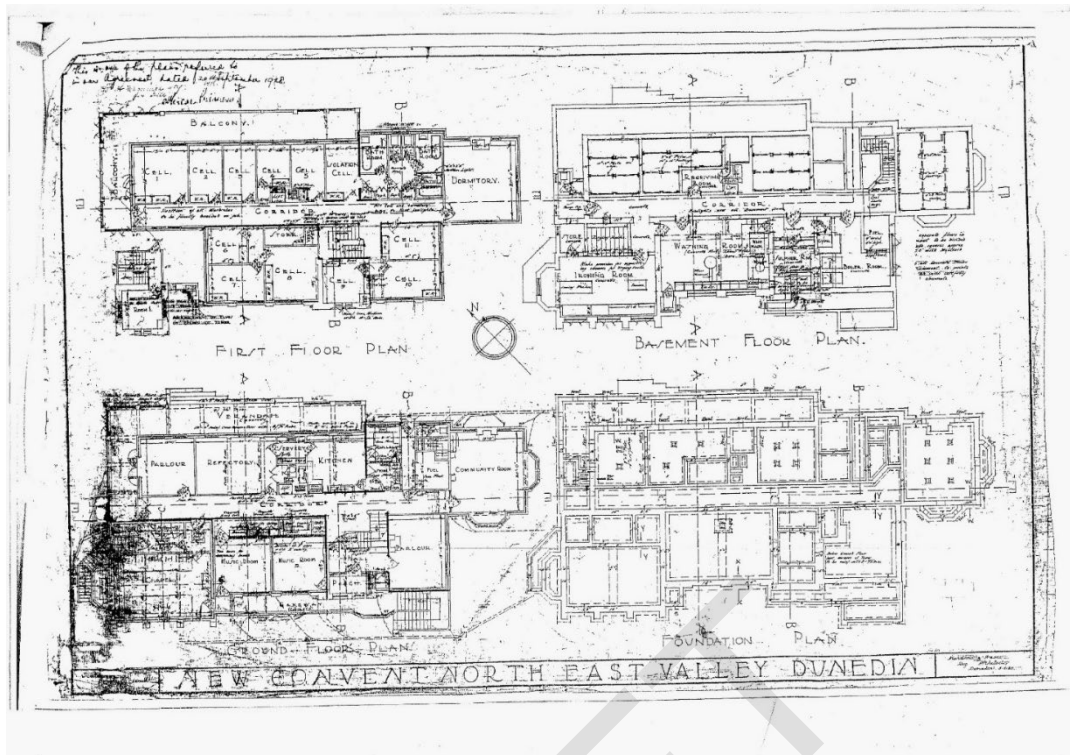
The Dominican Sisters, members of a religious order founded in the 1200s, arrived in Dunedin in 1871. They accompanied the newly appointed Bishop Moran to the Dunedin Diocese. Four days later they opened a high school, reflecting their commitment to religious education. The order established schools around Dunedin.

In 1895, the Dominican Sisters founded the Sacred Heart School on North Road in North East Valley, on a site adjoining the Church of the Sacred Heart. The church was designed by FW Petre in 1892. In 1903, the sisters purchased the site for the convent, originally part of the ten-acre Solomon property. It was enlarged by the addition of 30 acres running up to Pine Hill Road. There, a secluded wooden house became the first Santa Sabina Convent. In an interview in 1997, Sister Colman, who had come from County Galway in Ireland in 1924 and who had been a Superior at Santa Sabina in 1960, remembered the old convent as a small house amid quite lovely surroundings. The *New Zealand Tablet* in June 1932 described the situation of the old convent:

With its background of beautiful native bush, this interesting old building was the cherished home during many years of the pioneer Dominican Nuns of ‘the Valley.’ Picturesquely situated, “Santa Sabina” occupies a very cherished spot, interwoven with many fond recollections of strenuous though happy days spent there by the little community of white robed Sisters who, with singular energy and self-sacrifice, devoted their lives to the spiritual and educational interests of the little children of the district, and in works incidental to their holy vocation.

The new convent building was designed by Dunedin architectural partnership Mandeno and Fraser. Mandeno and Fraser had designed buildings for the Dominicans previously. In 1922-1923 the partnership designed new classrooms and additions to the convent and boarding school at Teschemakers in the Waitaki District. The two-storey convent building, also of Oamaru stone was opened in February 1923.





Santa Sabina was planned with three floors: a large basement housing a major laundry facility with boiler, washing machine and hydro extractor, a sulphur room, and drying and ironing room; the main floor with public entrance, music rooms, kitchen and refectory for dining, parlours and community room, and the chapel and sacristy with its own outside entrance; and a third floor with 11 cells, bathroom facilities and a dormitory, as well as a large glassed-in balcony. There was a bedroom in the tower and above that, a small room with steep ladder access only, for quiet escape, one sister suggested.

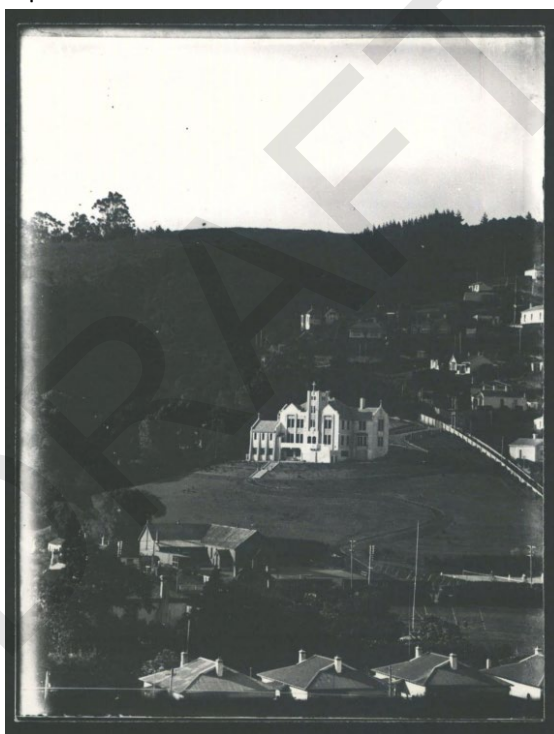
The foundations were concrete, as were structural beams and piers and lintels. Walls over 15" thick were packed with bluestone. Wall construction was brick. All concrete was plastered, inside and out. Interior walls, not otherwise finished, were finished with plaster. Chapel walls and walls of all main corridors were to be finished in cement, polished to a high shine. All timber (unless otherwise specified –heart Totara was used on some details) was to be red pine (not less than 50% heart). The main door was Kauri, as were the laundry fittings. All ground floor rooms, all halls, all passages and stairs were Red Pine. The exterior was finished in cream coloured plaster, portions of the base of towers and bays to be darker. The laundry plant from St Dominic's Priory was to be re-erected at Santa Sabina, with additional equipment added as required.

The tenders advertised in May 1928. After the tenders were advertised, the Dominican sisters decided that the cost was beyond what they could manage all at once and asked that the community room and the dormitory be removed from the contract (that is the building of these items delayed only), and that the height of the tower be reduced. The Mother Prioress writing that the Priory Council believed that "we should not be justified in burdening ourselves with such a heavy debt in the present state of our finances." After considering the plans the Council decided that building of the community room, and dormitory on the second floor should be delayed, and that the portion of the tower "which may be regarded as purely ornamental" should be delayed. The Sisters also advised the architects that the position of

the sulphur room was not appropriate, and that they wished for the removal of it from its position “as the experience of the Sisters is all against the conjunction of sulphur room [and] machinery of any kind. As the Sisters have had years of trial in this matter we cannot ignore their re-presentation.” Seven of the tenderers, who tendered on the work as a whole, were asked to resubmit.

Daniel O’Connell (“Builders, Contractor and Valuers” of Kilgour Street, Roslyn) won the revised contract, with a full price of £10,159 (or with the omissions noted above £9450). The laying out of the grounds was directed by Mr H. Hart, and the concrete steps were donated by Mrs Harily. O’Connell had also worked on the Teschemakers buildings, south of Oamaru.

The foundation stone for the building was laid on 28 April 1929. After the stone was blessed, an address was given by Bishop Brodie, at nearby Sacred Heart School. The building was opened by Bishop Brodie in a private ceremony on the 18 March 1930. The first Mass was offered by the bishop in the new chapel the following morning, the feast of St Joseph, and on that day the Sisters took up residence.



Santa Sabina soon after construction (Santa Sabina Convent Hocken Snapshot, accessed 19 Oct 2022, <https://hocken.recollect.co.nz/nodes/view/9566>)

Santa Sabina Convent was home for the Dominican Sisters until 1988. From 1988 until the early 2000s it was used as residential accommodation for students. In the early 2000s, the was converted to apartments, and a multi-unit development was built on the grounds.

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

HISTORIC/SOCIAL

The building demonstrates heritage values within this criterion. Santa Sabina represents the history of the Dominican Sisters in Dunedin, in particular their relationship with the Catholic Community of North East Valley, the convent being located close to Sacred Heart Church and Sacred Heart School.

SPIRITUAL/CULTURAL

The building demonstrates heritage values within this criterion. Santa Sabina has cultural significance because of its former association with a religious teaching order (Dominican Sisters). In its form and location, it demonstrates a distinctive way of life and culture characteristic of religious community life.

DESIGN

The building demonstrates heritage values within this criterion. Santa Sabina, although now surrounded by a complex of modern apartments, remains a prominent building above North East Valley because of the quality of its design, its white plaster finish and elevated location. Its location on the opposite hillside to the Presbyterian Knox College is a notable juxtaposition. Architecturally, it has significance as an interwar ecclesiastical building designed by significant Dunedin architectural practice Mandeno and Fraser.

TECHNOLOGICAL/SCIENTIFIC

The building does not demonstrate heritage values within this criterion.

REFERENCES

Heritage New Zealand draft list entry report (saved to Pataka)

<https://www.dominicans.org.nz/dominican-family-projects/sisters/about-us/> (accessed 19 October 2022)

<https://nzcatholic.org.nz/2021/04/27/dominican-sisters-celebrate-150-years-in-nz/> (accessed 19 October 2022)

<https://sacredheartdn.school.nz/3547-2/>, accessed 19 October 2022

Date Assessment Transcribed	6 September 2023	Author	HB
Date Peer Reviewed	17 July 2024	Reviewer	MM
Date Confirmed Complete	31 July 2024		