# HERITAGE ASSESSMENT FOR SCHEDULED HERITAGE BUILDING: FORMER CURTIS HOUSE



Photo: DCC

# **PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Temporary 2GP Scheduled Heritage Building Reference No:	BX061		
Address:	18 Forbury Road, Dunedin		
Building Name:	Former Curtis House		
Located within a Heritage Precinct:	No		
HNZPT List Reference & Description:	N/A		
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	Does not meet 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 from 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 excluding rear elevation
	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	Rear elevation

# STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The 1936 former Curtis house has design significance as an Art Deco/Moderne residence designed by Dunedin architectural practice Stone and Sturmer. At the time it was built, this house was noted for its unusual construction methodology; It is likely that the housed used the Steeltex mesh system, an American patented product (1926) that arrived in the country c.1929. The dwelling features in Peter Shaw's architectural history of New Zealand as a representative example of this style. Stone and Sturmer were exponents of this style, the former Curtis House a modest example of their domestic work that retains a high level of authenticity and integrity.

The place is comparable to scheduled heritage buildings within Dunedin of a similar type. When compared with other scheduled buildings, the former Curtis house meets the threshold to be included on the district plan heritage schedule.

# **HISTORICAL SUMMARY**

Architectural Period	Interwar (1914-1939)		
Style	Art Deco		
Era/Date of Construction	1936		
Architect/Designer/Builder	Stone and Sturmer (architects); Wood and McCormack builders		
Historic Use & Cultural Associations	Former Curtis residence		
Primary Construction Materials	Masonry, plaster, timber door and widow joinery		
Notable Architectural Characteristics	Two storey, Art Deco/Moderne form, chamfered corners, roof concealed by parapet, upper level balcony, integrated chimney, banded decoration, multipane windows, leadlighting.		

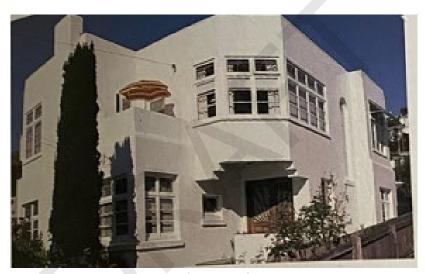
# Previous site development

This land was subdivided from a larger holding in 1936. The subdivision plan shows a stone house on the adjoining section, with the stone stables located at the rear of the holding. No structures are shown on the subject lot. The new title was issued to agent Lewis Nathaniel Cortissos in April 1936.

Lewis Nathaniel Cortissos (also known as Lewis Curtis) was born in Dunedin in 1884. He was a descendant of a London-based Portuguese Jewish family. His father had emigrated to Victoria, Australia, in the midnineteenth century, before moving with his wife to Dunedin around the 1870s. Lewis Curtis and his father Benjamin (Ben Curtis) were involved in bookmaking, appearing before the courts on betting related matters more than once. By the mid-1920s he had become a licensed bookmaker. Cortissos was described in the Dunedin South electoral roll in 1931 as an 'agent.' Cortissos died in 1951.

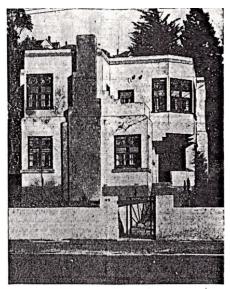
#### Design and construction

The former Curtis house is built in Art Deco style. The Curtis house features in Peter Shaw's New Zealand Architecture from Polynesian Beginnings to 1990. Shaw describes the stuccoed dwelling as 'more obviously Art Deco' compared with the curvaceous Spanish mission influenced dwellings of the time. Shaw writes 'Its corners, instead of being curved, are chamfered and give the house a geometric rigour further emphasised by clear and textured glass arranged in sharply angled decorative patterns. In the spacious stairwell a stained and painted window depicts a ruined Scottish castle.'



Peter Shaw's image of the house

Shaw identifies the architects as Wood & McCormack – whose names are on the architectural drawings. A 1937 feature article on the house identifies Stone and Sturmer as architects and 'Wood and McCormick' as builders. They were among the Dunedin architects who adopted the Art Deco/Moderne style in the mid-1930s. Architectural historian Michael Findlay writes that 'streamlining' was the 'New Zealand response to the influences of avant-garde Europeans and the glamour of Hollywood.'Sturmer's designs include Greenslade House (1936) in Vauxhall. Other contemporary examples include the Sidey House in Tolcarne Ave, designed by Arthur Salmond in 1934, shortly after he returned from Europe. Miller and White designed three houses on Park Street in similar form. Stone and Sturmer's house for Curtis is a contemporary of these dwellings, albeit at a more modest scale, designed for a client outside the city's elite.



BEAUTIFUL DUNEDIN HOME, which was built bury road, for Mr L. Curtis.—(See article.)

Photograph from Evening Star proclaiming a 'Beautiful Dunedin Home'

The stuccoed house has a composite brick and timber frame, a method the newspaper article describes as novel. Jeremy Salmond describes stucco as a 'common finish for cheap masonry buildings. In New Zealand it was usually applied directly to sheet materials (asbestos cement, Gibraltar Board sheathing, Konka board). Konka board was first used in 1912.

Stucco was a common finish for the Moderne houses of the 1930s. Using stucco over mesh looks to be a developing construction method. The Evening Star describes it as a 'new type of construction that has arisen by the use of exterior plaster on a wooden framed building. The ground floor has been built in single brick and plastered, while the plaster has been applied to the steel mesh tacked to the timber framing of the upper story.

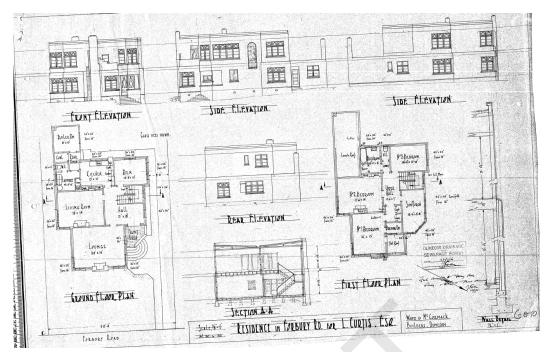
The interior walls have been covered with rough lining before the fibrous plaster wall board was applied, and this has served as an additional means of bracing the structure.' 2 This was a method Stone and Sturmer also used for the Greenslade House at Vauxhall. Architectural historian Michael Findlay describes the method as 'unusual.' It is possible that this house uses the Steeltex mesh system, patented in the USA in 1926, that is advertised in New Zealand from around 1929.4 It allowed a plaster system to be attached to the timber frame without lathes or sheet lining. Alongside the design, the Star noted the quality of the fit out, the central heating, modern layout, and decorative glasswork.

<sup>2</sup> Evening Star, 20 Jul 1937, p. 2.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Jeremy Salmond, Old New Zealand Houses 1800-1940, Reed, Auckland 1986, pp. 205-206.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Julia Gatley (ed), Long Live the Modern: New Zealand's New Architecure, 1904-1984, Auckland University Press, Auckland, p. 21.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> https://misspreservation.com/2014/02/12/metal-wire-lath-all-hail-sir-fabric/ accessed 3 February 2023.



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#### <u>Later history and development</u>

The Curtis house remains largely unaltered. It continues to be a private residence.

# **Notable people/Themes**

#### Stone and Sturmer

Gorton R Stone (1902-1979) and Frank Sturmer (1901-1980) were an architectural partnership active in the 1930s and 1940s.

Frank von Sturmer had studied at the Auckland School of Architecture but did not graduate. He designed several houses for Dunedin's professional and business elite, and flats such as the Commodore Flats in Invercargill (Category 2 historic place, List No. 2454).<sup>5</sup>

Both were associates of the Incorporated Association of Architects and Surveyors of England ('A.I.A.A.' and 'A.A.I.A.A.'). Both describe themselves as registered in Great Britain, and as structural engineers and 'incorporated architects.' That association was described in the *New Zealand Herald* as a 'body with a standing and prestige in the architectural world comparable with those of the Royal Institute of British Architects, having equal rights with that eminent body to appoint members to the 'Architects' Registration Council.' The association was formed in 1925, still surviving in its modern-day form as the Association of Building Engineers.

#### **Lewis Nathaniel Cortissos**

Lewis Nathaniel Cortissos (also known as Lewis Curtis) and his father Benjamin (Ben Curtis) were involved in bookmaking, appearing before the courts on betting related matters more than once. By the mid-1920s he had become a licensed bookmaker. Seemingly of dubious character but of financial means, it is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/2454 accessed 1 February 2023.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/6245359; New Zealand Herald, 18 Sep 1944, p. 7.

interesting to consider that Stone and Sturmer, who were working for notable (and reputable) Dunedin families, accepted Curtis' commission. The association of the house with Lewis Curtis, although interesting, is not sufficiently notable. Further research may broaden this understanding of the place.

#### Art Deco Architecture

The New Zealand Period House: A Conservation Guide records about the use of the Art Deco style in New Zealand:

This style was born at the Exposition des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes in Paris in 1925, but until 1960 it was termed Moderne. The term Art Deco was coined in the 1960s, to differentiate it from the more European and American functionalist modern architecture. This French style was embraced in the US building boom in the 1920s and was the first style to break with the American revivalist tradition.

Art Deco is considered an extension of Art Nouveau, with similarities in ornamentation, quality of craftsmanship and use of fine materials. Its development was also influenced by the avant-garde decorative arts world of Cubism, Constructivism and Futurism. Art Deco shared with Modernism a concern with the machine-age aesthetic and the design tenet of form following function. Its key decorative characteristics included zigzags, low-relief geometrical designs, chevrons, parallel and straight lines, and stylised floral designs. Materials commonly used were smooth-plastered concrete and decorative glass blocks. Typical features included decorative parapets, decorative cornices and flat pediments.

#### ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

# HISTORIC/SOCIAL

Associated with bookmaker Lewis Nathaniel Cortissos (also known as Lewis Curtis), the dwelling does not demonstrate sufficient heritage values within this criterion.

#### SPIRITUAL/CULTURAL

The building does not demonstrate heritage values within this criterion.

### **DESIGN**

The building demonstrates heritage values within this criterion. The former Curtis House has design significance as a 1936 Art Deco/Moderne suburban residence. Largely unaltered, it features in Peter Shaw's architectural history of New Zealand as a representative example of this style. the exterior favours geometric patterns, using chamfered corners in place of the more typical rounded forms. Stone and Sturmer were exponents of Art Deco style, the former Curtis House a modest example of their domestic work that retains a high level of authenticity and integrity.

# TECHNOLOGICAL/SCIENTIFIC

The building demonstrates heritage values within this criterion. At the time it was built, this house was noted for its unusual construction methodology; It is likely that the housed used the Steeltex mesh system, an American patented product (1926) that arrived in the country c.1929. Architectural historian Michael Findlay describes this construction method as unusual in its use at the Greenslade House (a contemporary of the Curtis house). This is an experimental use of a plaster finish over lightweight timber frames and demonstrates the early development of construction technologies. The former Curtis house has a low level of technological significance for its construction methodology.

# **REFERENCES**

Julia Gatley (ed), Long Live the Modern: New Zealand's New Architecure, 1904-1984, Auckland University Press, Auckland

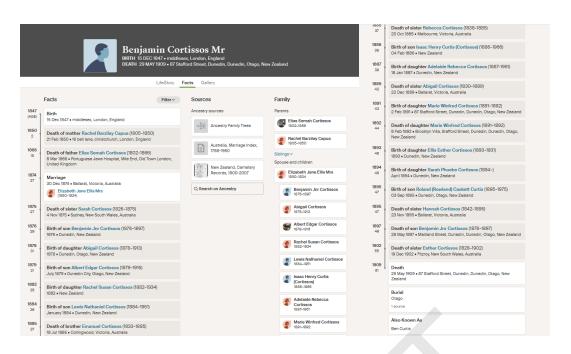
https://misspreservation.com/2014/02/12/metal-wire-lath-all-hail-sir-fabric/ accessed 3 February 2023 https://www.odt.co.nz/opinion/art-architecture-out-step-while

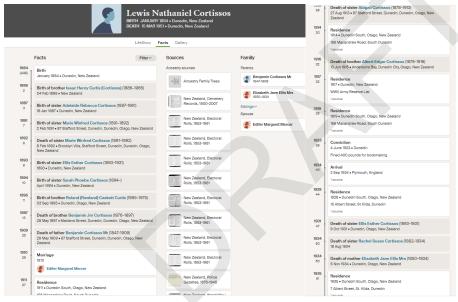
Jeremy Salmond, Old New Zealand Houses 1800-1940, Reed, Auckland 1986

Date Assessment Completed	21 September 2023	Author	НВ
Date Peer Reviewed	12 August 2024	Reviewer	MM
Date Confirmed Completed	12 August 2024		

# **APPENDIX**







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† Back to search results

Text **i** Research info **i** 

# THE COURTS.-YESTERDAY

SUPREME COURT.—CRIMINAL SITTINGS.

(Before His Honor Mr Justice Williams.)

(Before His Honor Mr Justice Williams.)

INDECENT ASSAULT.

In the case of Adam Scott, charged with indecent assault on a girl of eight years, the jury, after a retirement of close on an hour, returned with a verdict of guilty. Prisoner, who gave his age as twenty-eight years, was sentenced to five years' imprisonment with hard labor.

BETTING CASUS.

James Todd and Henry James Goodman were charged with assisting Abraham Mossin the business of betting. Lewis Curtis was charged with similarly assisting Benjamin Curtis. All three accused pleaded not guilty.—The Crown Prosesuor intimated that he would offer no evidence, and His Honor therefore directed the jury to acquir the accused

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> Otago Daily Times > 5 September 1933 > Page 8 >



UNIVERSITY OF N.Z
DEGREE EXAMINATIONS.
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The following candidates from Australia
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History of Architecture L.-C. A. Anderson, W. J. Bedford, P. C. I. Crookes; Alice M. M. V. Greenwood, R. K. Land, R. D. Morgan.

Freehand Drawing.—C. A. Anderson W. J. Bedford, Alice M. M. V. Green wood, R. K. Land, R. D. Morgan, W. R. Simpson, J. M. Smeeton.

Practical Mathematics.-W. J. Bed ford, Alice M. M. V. Greenwood, R. D. Morgan.

Physics.-W. J. Bedford, P. C. 1 Creckes, R. D. Morgan.

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Architectural Construction II.—P. C. I.
Croeskes, G. W. Johnston, A. C. Marshall,
A. L. Salmond, C. Sanderson, A. J. Sedcole, R. A. Widdicombs.

Structural Mechanics L.-G. W. John ston, A. C. Marshall, C. J. McLean, A. L. Salmond, C. Sanderson, A. J. Sedcole.

Perapective and Sciagraphy.—G. W. Johnston, A. C. Marshall, C. J. E. McLean, A. L. Salmond, C. Sanderson, R. A. Widdisombe.

Michael A. L. Salmond, C. Salderson,
Michael S. L. Salmond, C. Salderson,
Michael S. L. Salmond, C. Salderson,
Michael S. Salmation and
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History of Architecture, I—prey W.
Bickerton, H. J. Reverson, P. C. Organic,
Frances S.
Marine, L. W. Salmon, E. W.S. Dering,
Marine, L. W. Salmon, L. W.S. Dering,
Grebsed, A. F. Petroin, A. C. Trips, L. J.
Wachinstern, G. Goodwan, M. S. Matrick, L. W. Salmon, L. W. Salmon,
Marine, L. G. Goodwan, L. W. Salmon, L. W. Salmon,
Marine, L. G. Goodwan, M. S. Matrick,
Grebsed, A. F. Petroin, A. C. Trips, L. J.
Wachinstern, G. Goodwanie, M. S. Goodwan, M. S. Matrick,
G. Goodwan, M. G. Goodwanie, M. S. Matrick,
G. Goodwanie, M. G. Goodwanie, M. S. M. S. Matrick,
G. Goodwanie, M. G. Goodwanie, M. S. M. S. Matrick,
G. Goodwanie, M. G. Goodwanie, M. S. M.

Architectural Construction II.—H. O. Bawden, H. B. Fleck, J. E. Stedman.
Structural Metalanics I.— H. O. Bawden, J. Faylor, and Sciagraphy.—H. O. Bawden, E. W. Harknee, R. W. McKay, C. Z. Moleso, F. G. F. Sheppard, J. Taylor.

Structural Mechanics IL.-L. B. Har-ris, L. M. H. Walker, B. C. Witten, W. A. Yates.

A. J. Walker, H. C. Witter, W. A. Sanistan and Hygiers.—B. B. Gibb. Sanistan and Hygiers.—B. B. Gibb. L. B. Herris, E. Silvan, B. Carn, B. Carn, C. Witter, W. A. Yater.
Siteragia and Value of Material.—B. Siteragia and Value of Material.—B. Horry of Des Witter, W. A. Yater.
B. Harris, A. H. Mitchell, E. Seemer, J. Ugben, B. C. Witten, W. A. Yater.
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UNIVERSITY OF N.Z.

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ARCHITECTS' INSTITUTE
EXAMINATION RESULTS. Following are the results of the exam-inations conducted by the New Zealand Institute of Architects for admission to mambarship.— Following as the rowles of the translaminities of Architects for administration for a control of the control

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#### UNIVERSITY TESTS.

#### ARCHITECTURAL STUDENTS.

PASSES IN VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

The following Auckland candidates satisfied the examiners in the undermentioned subjects of the examinations conducted by the University of New Zealand for the Associateship of the New Zealand Institute of Architects:

History of Architecture, Part I.—J. D. Allingham, R. J. Atkinson, I. M. Clarkson, T. R. Evans, G. D. L. Lawn, A. L. Luke, F. Middlelrook, S. W. Minson, A. I. Mitchell, L. D. Morrison, I. R. Me-Allum, A. P. Pascoe, R. A. Thorpe, W. G. Warren, R. Watt, L. G. Williams, F. J. Yates.

Architectural Construction, Part I.—

F. J. Yates.

Architectural Construction, Part I.—
J. D. Allingnam, I. M. Clarkson, G. D.
Griffiths, W. A. Lane, G. D. L. Lawn,
A. L. Luke, F. Middlebrook, S. W. Minson, L. D. Morrison, A. P. Pascoe, R. R.
Spiers, R. A. Thorpe, W. G. Warren, R.
Watt
Freshers, S.

Watt Freehand Drawing.—J. D. Allingham, I. M. Clarkson, T. R. Evans, W. A. Lane, A. L. Luke, F. Middlebrook, L. D. Mor-

rison, A. F. Peterson, B. S. Smyth, R. R. Spiers, R. A. Thorpe, W. G. Warren, L. G. Williams, F. J. Yates. Practical Mathematics.—R. J. Atkinson, W. C. de R. Barclay, H. J. Brewster, T. R. Evans, L. W. Lowther, A. L. Luke, C. Muir, I. R. McAllum, C. R. McLean, B. S. Smyth, R. A. Thorpe, W. G. Warren.

C. Mair, I. R. McAllum, C. R. McLean, B. S. Smyth, R. A. Thorpe, W. G. Warren.

History of Architecture, Part II.—H. J. Brewster, P. C. Cornish, G. F. Dawson, R. D. Finlayson, L. W. Lowther, Marion A. G. Miller, L. N. Orchard, A. C. Tripe.

Architectural Construction, Part II.—W. C. de R. Barclay, G. F. Dawson, R. D. Finlayson, T. J. W. Haiselden, E. W. Harkness, L. W. Lowther, A. I. Mitchell, R. W. McKay, C. R. McLean, C. H. D. Porter, F. G. F. Sheppard, A. C. Tripe, L. J. Wolfe.

Structural Mechanics, Part I.—H. J. Brewster, P. C. Cornish, G. F. Dawson, R. D. Finlayson, E. W. Harkness, L. W. Lowther, Marion A. G. Miller, A. I. Mitchell, R. W. McKay, L. N. Orchard, F. G. F. Sheppard, L. J. Wolfe.

Perspective and Sciagraphy.—P. C. Cornish, G. F. Dawson, L. W. Lowther, L. N. Orchard, L. J. Wolfe.

History of Architecture, Part III.—H. O. Bawden, R. W. McKay, C. R. McLean, K. I. Napier, F. G. F. Sheppard, Structural Mechanics, Part II.—A. H. Mitchell.

Santation and Hygiene and Electrical

Santation and Hygiene and Electrical Installation.—A. H. Mitchell, R. W. Mc-

Strength and Value of Materials.—H.
O. Bawden, R. W. McKay, F. D.
Stewart, F. Sturmer.
Theory of Architectural Design, Part I.
—H. O. Bawden, H. B. Fleck, R. W. McKay, K. I. Napier, F. G. F. Sheppard,

pers > New Zealand Herald > 12 January 1929 > Page 13 > Th

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Evening Star

22 August 1932

Macandrew Bay-town.—Finder please communicate F. Sturmer, P.W.D.; reward. T OST. Mullet Net, Port Chalmers.