

## HERITAGE ASSESSMENT FOR SCHEDULED HERITAGE BUILDING: FORMER W NEES AND SONS SHOWROOM AND WAREHOUSE



*Google Streetview (Sept 2020)*

### PROPERTY INFORMATION

|                                                        |                                              |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Temporary 2GP Scheduled Heritage Building Reference No | BX088                                        |
| Address                                                | 266 Hanover Street, Dunedin                  |
| Located within a Heritage Precinct                     | No                                           |
| 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 |

### SUMMARY OF 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/structure/site 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              | Façades to Harrow Street, Hanover Street, and Anzac Ave                                                |
|        | 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

The former W Nees Furniture Showroom and Warehouse, at 266 Hanover Street, has historical significance for its association with W Nees and Company, one of Dunedin's most significant furniture manufacturers and retailers active from the 1860s until 1990. William Nees and Sons, Ltd (later W Nees and Company) commissioned the c1923 building and operated on the site until 1990 when they went into receivership. The building has architectural significance as a commercial building designed by notable Dunedin architectural partnership Coombs and White. The building retains its overall form, scale, and materiality; however, later alterations and additions are responsible for its present 'Moderne' aesthetic.

The former Nees Furniture Warehouse and Showroom is comparable to scheduled heritage buildings within Dunedin of a similar history and period. When compared with other scheduled buildings, it meets the threshold to be included on the district plan heritage schedule.

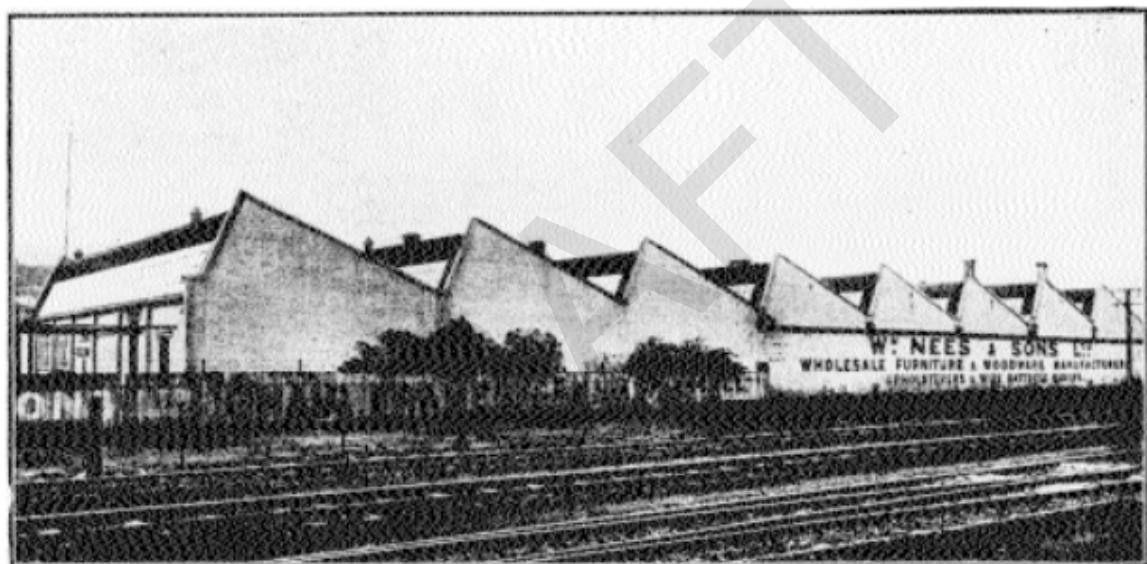
## HISTORICAL SUMMARY

|                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Architectural Period</b>                     | Interwar (1914-1939)                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Style</b>                                    | Moderne                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Era/Date of Construction</b>                 | 1923 – original construction<br>1925 – Addition<br>1950 – Alterations to façade<br>1957 and 1959 – Alterations to shopfront and façade<br>2020 – Alterations to exterior as part of interior refit |
| <b>Architect/Designer/Builder</b>               | Coombs and White (1923, 1925)<br>G Lawrence and Sons (contractors, 1923)<br>Miller, White and Dunn (1950)                                                                                          |
| <b>Historic Use &amp; Cultural Associations</b> | W Nees and Company Warehouse                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Primary Construction Materials</b>           | Masonry, concrete, steel framed windows                                                                                                                                                            |

|                                              |                                                                                                            |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Notable Architectural Characteristics</b> | Form and scale, horizontal banding, parapet concealing roof form, rounded corners to street intersections. |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### Previous site development

There were other buildings on this site prior to Nees' showroom and warehouse. William Nees and Son wrote to the Otago Harbour Board in September 1922 asking permission to remove the unoccupied 'old buildings now on these sections' to they could erect 'an up-to-date warehouse' on the site. The request was referred to the Reserves Committee. The request was granted with the condition that William Nees and Son guarantee that they would erect a new building.<sup>1</sup>



THE MODERN FURNITURE FACTORY OF WILLIAM NEES AND SONS,  
LIMITED, DUNEDIN.

This firm has just added a three-storey Warehouse alongside the Factory, making it the largest establishment of its kind in New Zealand.

*Otago Witness 4 September 1923 Page 42*

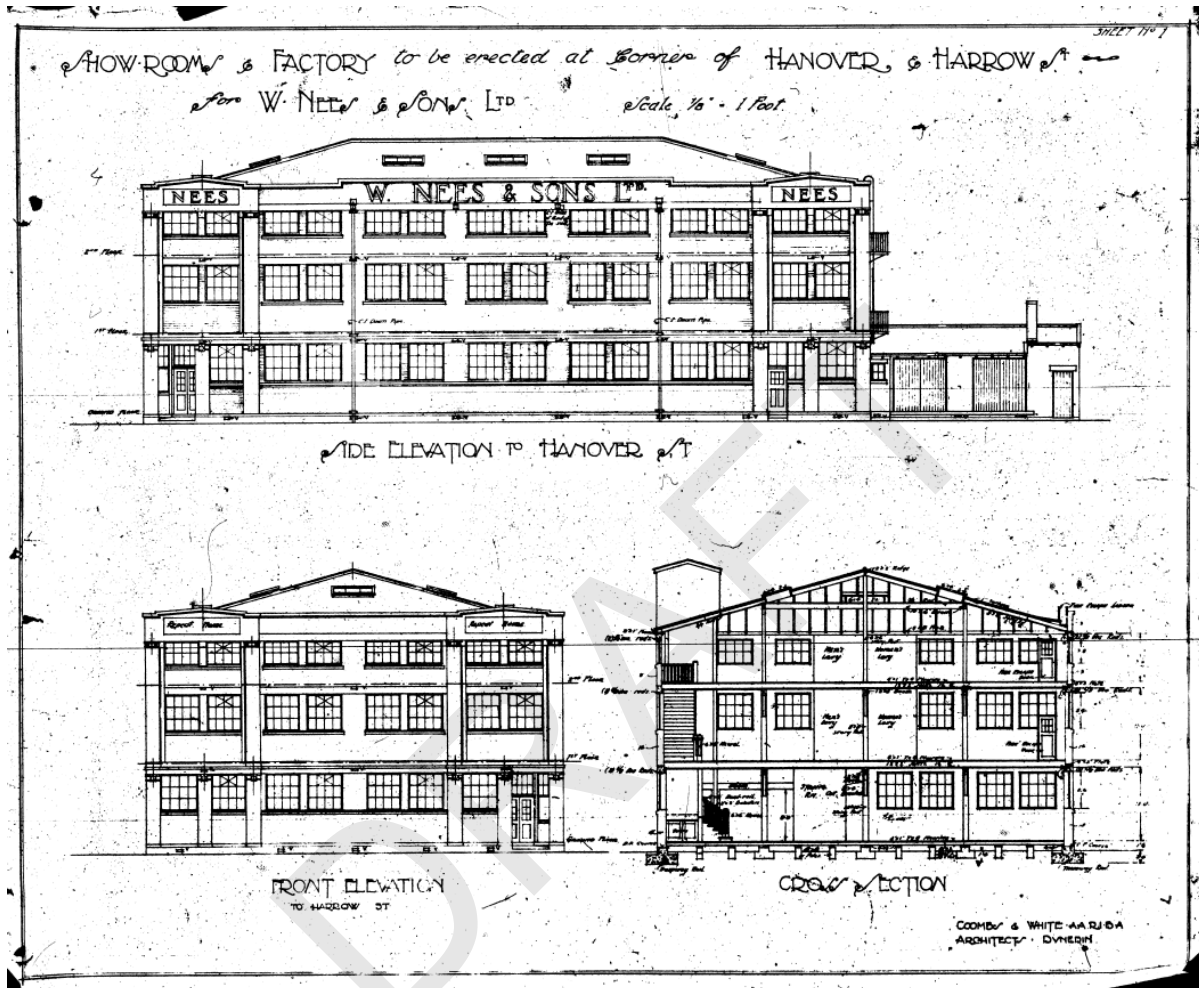
### Design and construction

Architects Coombs & White invited tenders for the erection of a 'THREE-STOREY FURNITURE WAREHOUSE' for W Nees & Sons in December 1922.<sup>2</sup> The warehouse was to be used to display the furniture made at the

<sup>1</sup> *Otago Daily Times* 30 September 1922 Page 5; *Evening Star* 28 October 1922 Page 2

<sup>2</sup> *Otago Daily Times* 20 December 1922 Page 8; Hocken Collections holds the plans: H. Nees and Sons Limited, showrooms etc. corner of Hanover and Harrow Streets, Coombs and White architects (1922), Reference No: MS-0688/371.

company's adjacent factory, and also as display rooms for carpet and linoleum manufacturers. G Lawrence and Sons won the contract. The building was to complete in 22 weeks at a cost of £7,000.<sup>3</sup> A photograph of the firm's factory has a caption noting that the addition of the warehouse made the Nees' facility 'the largest establishment of its kind in New Zealand.'<sup>4</sup> The warehouse was open by the middle of 1923.

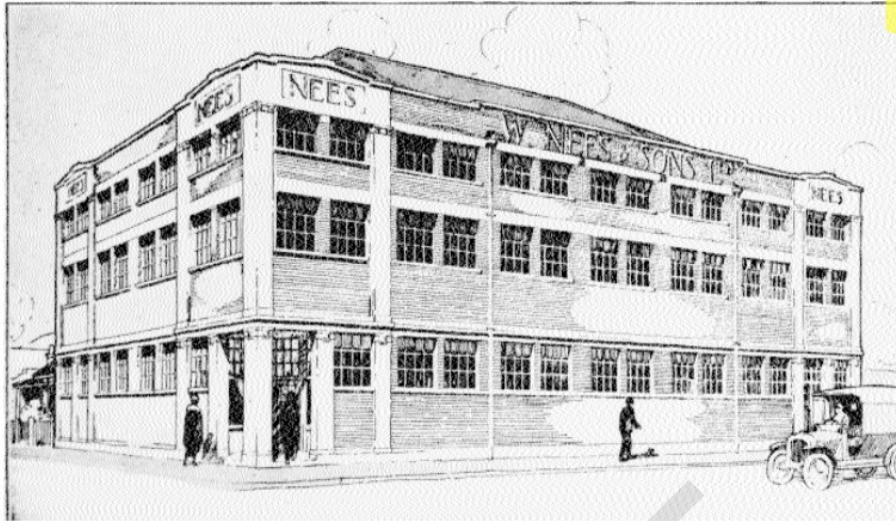


1923 plans for Nees Showrooms and Factory, Coombs & White (DCC Plans)

The warehouse provided open display spaces over three storeys, with multi-pane windows to provide good natural light a key feature. The Nees' company name appeared across the parapet on the street elevations.

<sup>3</sup> Otago Daily Times 22 January 1923 Page 4

<sup>4</sup> Otago Witness 4 September 1923 Page 42

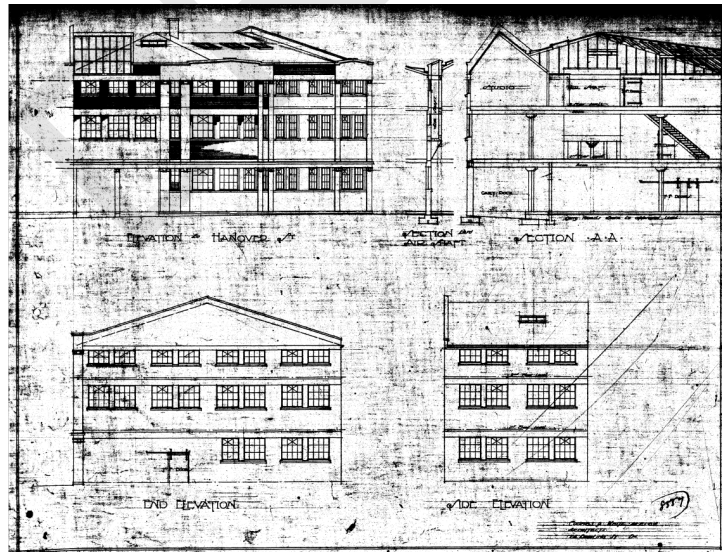


MESSRS **WILLIAM NEES** AND SONS, LIMITED, NEW WAREHOUSE,  
Which will be used to display the furniture made in the firm's factories, and also  
serve as a medium for the English and Scotch carpet and linoleum manufacturers to  
present their latest goods to the public.

*Otago Witness 20 March 1923 Page 53*

#### Later history and development

Additions were made to the warehouse in 1925, with an extension wrapping around the Anzac Avenue corner designed by Coombs & White. The additions provided an extra 10,000 feet of floor space.<sup>5</sup>



*1925 additions (DCC plans)*

<sup>5</sup> *Evening Star* 19 December 1925 Page 3

# Any NEES carpet for 50/- deposit during August- 579 to choose from!

Think. Any Carpet you desire from NEES magnificent stock delivered into your home for 50/- deposit. From famous British makers—Woodward, Grosvener, Templeton, Briston, and others, comes this magnificent selection—the most interesting and complete in New Zealand.

Pay for your Carpet in light instalments. It costs you nothing extra to use NEES deferred payment system—and nothing to inquire about it. NEES expect you to call. Come before August 31.



No extra charge for  
deferred payment at  
NEES.

| Amount      | Deposit | Per Week |
|-------------|---------|----------|
| up to £25   | 5s      | 8/-      |
| £25 to £50  | £10     | 10/-     |
| £50 to £75  | £15     | 15/-     |
| £75 to £100 | £20     | 20/-     |

Other amounts commensurate with the above scale!



This advertisement is the copyright property of Wm. NEES & Sons, Ltd.

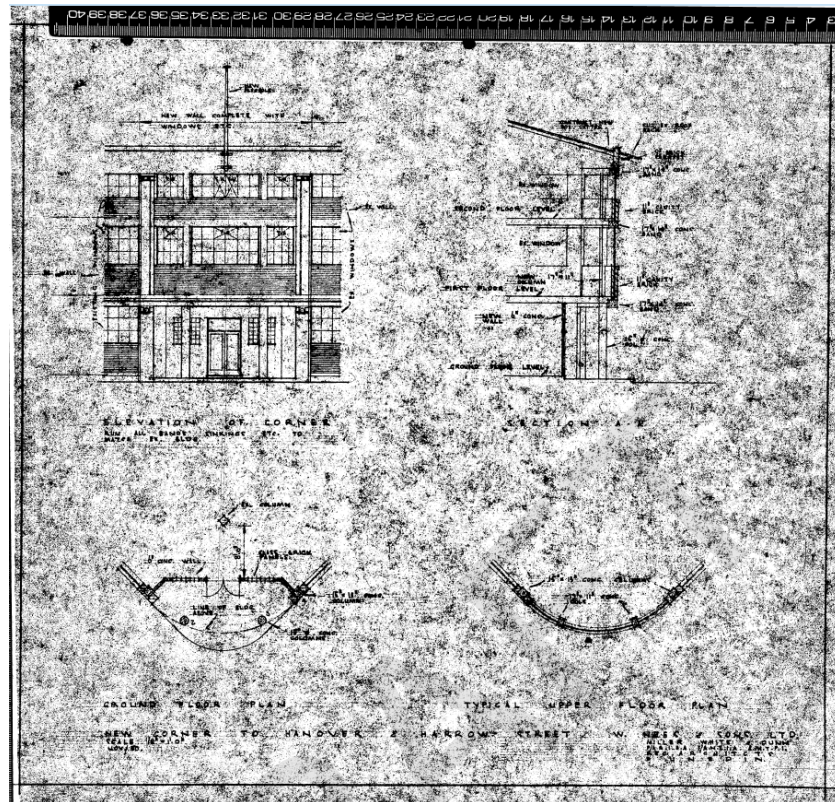
Otago Daily Times 8 August 1929 Page 2, showing the extended building

The company's extensive factory and warehouse occupied around a third of the Harrow/Hanover/Anzac block.



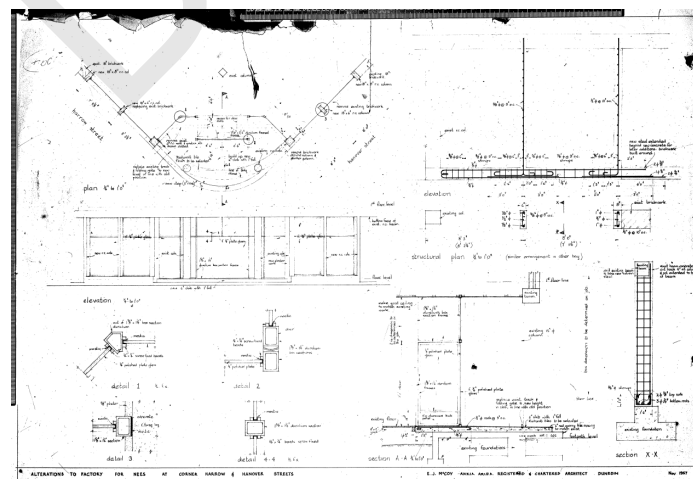
Nees Factory, Showroom and Warehouse (Date taken: 15/10/1942/Survey Number: SN223 Retrolens)

Further alterations were made in 1950, creating a curved corner entrance on Hanover and Harrow Streets, to a Miller, White and Dunn (the successor to Coombs and White) design, creating a more updated Moderne façade.

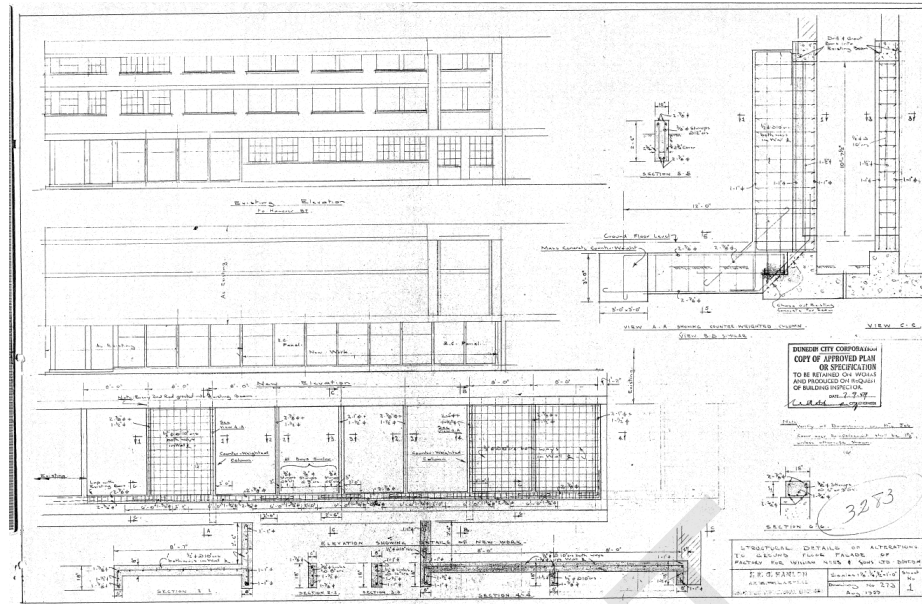


1950 alteration to shop front and entrance (Miller White and Dunn)

Miller, White and Dunn were commissioned to alter the shop front and entrance in 1950. Further alterations were made to the entrance and the ground floor façade in 1957 and 1959.



1957 EJ McCoy alterations to entrance



*Ground floor window alterations 1959 (J R Hanlon structural engineers)*

After Nees went into receivership the building had other occupants including the World Gym, and furniture retailers McKenzie and Willis. The building was seismically strengthened in 2014. There have been further alterations to some of the windows as part of commercial refit of the office space in 2020.

### **Notable people/Themes**

#### **Furniture Retailing and Manufacturing**

The Dunedin Contextual Thematic History records that Dunedin became a major furniture manufacturing centre from the 1870s. Dunedin had some of the largest furniture manufacturers in New Zealand. Notable companies including Butterfield, Scoular and Chishom, and William Nees.<sup>6</sup>

#### **W Nees and Company**

William Nees and Sons, Ltd, were a major Dunedin wholesale furniture manufacturer. The cabinet making company was established in 1863. Nees were also involved in gold mining and in sawmilling. The company was incorporated in 1903. Branches were established in Dunedin, Invercargill, Oamaru, and Timaru. The company went into receivership in 1990.<sup>7</sup> Their factory and warehouse/showroom were on the corner of Anzac Avenue and Hanover Street. The factory has largely been demolished.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Michael Findlay, 'Dunedin Contextual Thematic History', Volume 1/Theme 12, Dunedin City Council, 2009, p. 219.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.deadsouls.co.nz/shop/william-nees-and-sons-ltd-wholesale-furniture-manufacturers-dunedin-catalogue-no-19/>; WELCOME TO THE HOCKEN Friends of the Hocken Collections BU LLETI N N U MBER 56 : February 2007 [https://www.otago.ac.nz/library/pdf/hoc\\_fr\\_bulletins/Bull\\_56\\_Retailers.pdf](https://www.otago.ac.nz/library/pdf/hoc_fr_bulletins/Bull_56_Retailers.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dccarchives/27070692523>

### Coombs and White

Leslie Coombs attended Otago Boys' High School. He studied architectural drawing through South Kensington School before working in the office of J Charlesworth in Wellington, before studying architecture in London. Coombs passed the examination for the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1911.<sup>9</sup> He returned to Dunedin and entered private practice.

Coombs went into practice with Edmund Anscombe c. 1912. The partnership was dissolved in September 1913.<sup>10</sup>

James Hodge White (1895-1952) and Leslie Douglas Coombs (1885-1952) were in partnership between 1922 and 1927.<sup>11</sup> James White was educated in Dunedin and Hobart. He entered the office of Salmond and Vanes as a cadet before joining Mason and Wales. After military service in World War One he studied at the Architectural Association in London, gaining a RIBA degree. He worked in several London firms and travelled to America before returning to Dunedin.<sup>12</sup>

Coombs and Whites' early commissions included the Nees Warehouse (1922), and the Southland and Milton War Memorials (1923), and the Otago Boys' High School Memorial Gateway (1923).

White went on to establish the firm of Miller & White in 1927 with Eric S C Miller. Miller & White took over the Dunedin practice of Edmund Anscombe, who left the city in 1928. After Eric Miller died in 1948, Ian Gilman Dunn became partner.<sup>13</sup> The practice were architects to the University of Otago, and responsible for some substantial Dunedin buildings. White designed the Regent Theatre, the Willi Fels Wing of the Otago Museum, and Allbell Chambers as well as city residences and commercial buildings.<sup>14</sup>

## **ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

### **HISTORIC/SOCIAL**

The building demonstrates heritage values within this criterion. The former Nees Warehouse has historical significance for its association with significant Dunedin furniture retailer and manufacturer W Nees and Sons. The company grew out of its goldrush era beginnings, trading until 1990. The company was one of the largest businesses of its type in New Zealand and occupied this site for close to 60 years. The warehouse represents the significant manufacturing history of Dunedin. It also has significance for its association with Coombs and White, and successor firm Miller, White and Dunn, significant twentieth century architectural practices.

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<sup>9</sup> *Feilding Star* 18 January 1911 Page 4

<sup>10</sup> *Progress* 1 October 1913 Page 740

<sup>11</sup> Christine McCarthy, 'Good Architecture should not be a plaything': New Zealand architecture in the 1920s, *AHA: Architectural History Aotearoa* (2011) vol 8:1-19. P. 2.

<sup>12</sup> *Otago Witness* 17 May 1921 Page 47

<sup>13</sup> ARC-0520 Dalziel Architects Records, <https://hocken.recollect.co.nz/nodes/view/60881> accessed 9 February 2024.

<sup>14</sup> Hardwicke Knight and Niel Wales, *Buildings of Dunedin: An Illustrated Architectural Guide to New Zealand's Victorian City*, John McIndoe, Dunedin, 1988, pp.192-193.

## SPIRITUAL/CULTURAL

The building does not demonstrate heritage values within this criterion.

## DESIGN

The building demonstrates heritage values within this criterion. The former Nees Warehouse and Showroom has design significance as an interwar commercial building on a prominent corner site. Designed by architectural partnership Coombs and White, the Nees building is an early example of their commercial work, albeit with later alterations modernising the façade. The building retains its overall form, scale, and materiality; however, later alterations and additions are responsible for its present 'Moderne' aesthetic.

## TECHNOLOGICAL/SCIENTIFIC

The building does not demonstrate heritage values within this criterion.

## REFERENCES

<https://www.deadsouls.co.nz/shop/william-nees-and-sons-ltd-wholesale-furniture-manufacturers-dunedin-catalogue-no-19/>; WELCOME TO THE HOCKEN Friends of the Hocken Collections BULLETIN NUMBER 56 : February 2007 [https://www.otago.ac.nz/library/pdf/hoc\\_fr\\_bulletins/Bull\\_56\\_Retailers.pdf](https://www.otago.ac.nz/library/pdf/hoc_fr_bulletins/Bull_56_Retailers.pdf)

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|                                  |                  |                 |    |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|----|
| <b>Date Assessment Completed</b> | 12 February 2023 | <b>Author</b>   | HB |
| <b>Date Peer Reviewed</b>        | 6 August 2024    | <b>Reviewer</b> | MM |
| <b>Assessment Updated</b>        | 6 August 2024    |                 |    |

DRAFT