

## HERITAGE ASSESSMENT FOR SCHEDULED HERITAGE BUILDING: PORT CHALMERS PIONEER HALL



Google Streetview, August 2023

### PROPERTY INFORMATION

|                                                         |                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Temporary 2GP Scheduled Heritage Building Reference No. | BX073                                        |
| Address                                                 | 45 George Street, Port Chalmers              |
| Located within a Heritage Precinct                      | N/A                                          |
| HNZPT List Reference & Description                      | N/A                                          |
| Heritage Covenant:                                      | No                                           |
| Building Use at Time of Record                          | Community Hall                               |
| 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 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                                                                                                |
|--------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ✓      | <b>Building envelope</b>              | Entire external building envelope excluding the rear elevation and external heat pump units.           |
|        | <b>External/ancillary elements</b>    |                                                                                                        |
|        | <b>Internal elements and/or rooms</b> | Not considered as part of this desktop assessment. Owner may nominate interior elements for protection |
| ✓      | <b>Excluded elements</b>              | Heat pump units; Rear elevation                                                                        |

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Port Chalmers Pioneer Hall has architectural, historical, and social significance. The hall was a strong historical and social association with the Port Chalmers community having been built for the Port Chalmers Old Identities and Early Settler Association in 1939. Donated by prominent Port Chalmers businessman Isaac Stevenson and built by Port Chalmers firm Love Construction, the hall has served as a community meeting place since then, including housing a Plunket Room. The hall has design significance as an Art Deco/Moderne design by Dunedin architectural partnership Stone and Sturmer.

The Pioneer Hall 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>                                    | Art Deco/Moderne                                                                 |
| <b>Era/Date of Construction</b>                 | 1939                                                                             |
| <b>Architect/Designer/Builder</b>               | Stone and Sturmer (architectural partnership)<br>Love Construction (Contractors) |
| <b>Historic Use &amp; Cultural Associations</b> | Port Chalmers Early Settlers' Association Hall                                   |
| <b>Primary Construction Materials</b>           | Assumed plastered masonry, tile, timber window joinery                           |
| <b>Notable Architectural Characteristics</b>    | Typical Art Deco/Moderne detailing                                               |

### Previous site development

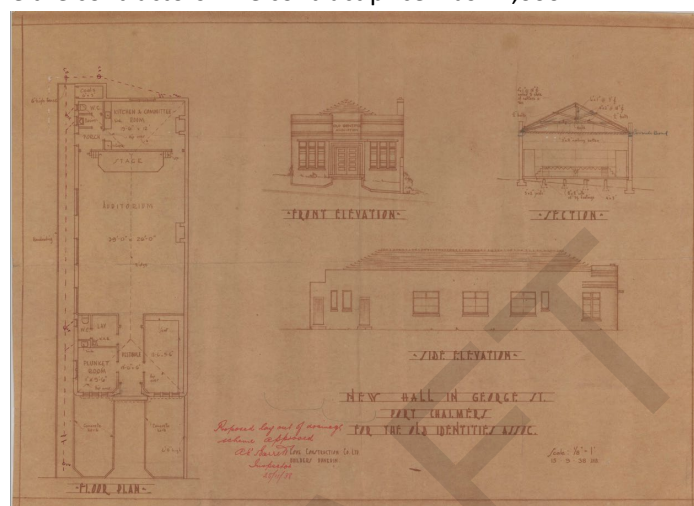
The hall was built on a site that was noted as vacant prior to its construction.

### Design and construction

Port Chalmers businessman and former mayor Isaac Stevenson gifted the hall to the community. Stevenson made the initially anonymous donation to the Old Identities' Association of Port Chalmers. The

gift was conditional on the Old Identities Association and the Plunket Society being able to use their designated rooms, while the rest of the building was available for general use.<sup>1</sup>

Dunedin architects Stone and Sturmer designed the hall. Stone and Sturmer chose the Moderne style – the key elements being the curved plastered façade, rounded corners, horizontal decorative banding, and the stepped moulding around the main door. The hall is a single storey masonry building with a hipped tile roof with a decorative façade to George Street. Plans show the Plunket room and associated waiting room at the front of the building, with the auditorium, stage, kitchen, and committee room at the rear. Love Construction were the contractors. The contract price was £2,000.<sup>2</sup>



*DCC Plans*

Port Chalmers Mayor Thomas Scollay opened the hall on 8 July 1939.<sup>3</sup> The opening was attended by Dunedin Mayor AH Allen, Mayor of West Harbour A Smith, and chair of the Otago Harbour Board W Begg. Stevenson and his daughters Mrs Buchanan and Miss Stevenson also attended. Scollay told the crowd that the 'auld acquaintance had not been forgot', and that Stevenson, as a successful Port Chalmers businessman had always taken a 'keen interest in the welfare of Port Chalmers and its people.' Stevenson had been a great benefactor to the town, previously gifting a cricket pavilion, church spire, and bowling green. The mayor told the crowd 'this building is a perfect gift that will serve all the people in the Dominion.' Part of the building was to be used by the Plunket nurse, another part was for use by 'old identities', while the third part could be used for the social activities of the community. Miss Stevenson also gifted a piano. The mayor told the crowd that the hall would serve to link 'the glorious past with the more glorious future'. The hall was an 'architectural achievement of utility and beauty' and would serve as the Port Chalmers centennial memorial.<sup>1</sup>

#### Later history and development

The 1913 Port Chalmers Old Identities Society's collection was transferred to the old Post Office building and reopened as the Port Chalmers Museum in 1987 and has since been renamed the Regional Maritime Museum.

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<sup>1</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 20 June 1939, p. 12

<sup>2</sup> *Otago Daily Times*, 7 Oct 1938, p. 12

<sup>3</sup> *Evening Star*, 5 Jul 1939, p. 11.

The hall was taken over by Dunedin City Council on the amalgamation of councils. In 2007, Council decided to sell the hall. The community protested and after many submissions and a petition signed by more than 500 residents, the hall was handed back to the community in 2008. The Pioneer Opportunities and Resources Trust (PORT) was established to take responsibility for managing this valuable community asset. The Trust, along with hundreds of volunteers, has spent the last few years cleaning, repairing, painting, and improving the hall. The hall remains a significant community meeting place and is largely unaltered.<sup>4</sup>

### **Notable people/Themes**

#### **Early Settlers' and Old Identities Associations**

Historian Fiona Hamilton writes early settlers were seen as 'irreplaceable sources of history' – sources it was important to preserve as the basis of a 'collective past.' This at the time when that first generation of such settlers was aging or dying out. Settler societies or 'old identity' groups were a key element in this remembrance. Such societies collected the reminiscences of pioneers and conserved those recollections. The efforts were particularly evident with the jubilee of Otago in 1898. An 'old identities conversazione' in 1898 was attended by 3,000 people as part of the jubilee celebrations.<sup>5</sup> The wider discussion about the role and meaning of these settler organizations is part of the debate about 'colonial' history that was directly involved in 'the description and justification of the European presence as normative', and legitimate, while implicitly marginalizing Maori" – forming the basis for Pakeha history and traditions.<sup>6</sup> Hamilton concludes that "Pioneer' histories are the genealogies of communities striving for a sense of legitimacy in a recently settled land.'

The Port Chalmers Old Identities' Association was formed 26 September 1913. The society intended to record the 'pioneer experiences of their members' to provide a historical record for the future. They requested the Borough Council provide a room in the municipal buildings for meeting and for storing mementoes and records. Membership was to be composed of those who arrived before 1870 or were born before that year.<sup>7</sup> The objects of the association were to 'procure from members the early history of their arrival here, and incidents of life in those days, and have same on record, also to procure a room from the Port Chalmers Borough Council for receiving and preserving any historical facts or pictures of those times, and as a meeting place for members, also to serve as a local museum', and to 'call together by circular or advertisement a meeting of all those persons who come under this category, and have a social evening and their enrolment, and discuss what is thought to be the most suitable way of preserving and fostering such a society, and in other ways to discuss the matter.' John Mill was elected as President. Mrs F R Monson, who arrived in Nelson in 1842 and in Dunedin shortly after that told the gathering of her experiences of arriving at Otago heads and early residence with iwi at Otakou.<sup>8</sup> By March 1914, the group had 130 members.<sup>9</sup> Also known the Port Chalmers Early Settlers and Old Identities Association, the organisation later became the Port Chalmers Historical Society Inc.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://pioneerhall.org.nz/about/>

<sup>5</sup> *Evening Star*, 25 March 1898, p. 4

<sup>6</sup> Cited in Hamilton, p. 76.

<sup>7</sup> *Evening Star*, 27 September 1913, p. 6

<sup>8</sup> *Evening Star* 27 September 1913, p. 12

<sup>9</sup> *Evening Star*, 6 March 1914, p. 4

### Stone and Sturmer

Gorton R Stone (1902-1979) and Frank Sturmer (1901-1980) formed 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>10</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.'<sup>11</sup> The association was formed in 1925, still surviving in its modern-day form as the Association of Building Engineers.

### Love Construction

Love Construction were a significant Port Chalmers construction company. Initially Love Brothers, the company was formed by brothers JY, Bob, and Bill Love of Port Chalmers in 1910. JY Love ran the company for 58 years. Their first contract was building a waterside workers' shelter at the port. The company grew quickly and had around 100 staff by 1939. After the war the company was involved with prefabricated housing but also large health, civil, education and commercial sectors in the South Island.<sup>12</sup> In 1969, they merged with WH Naylor to form Naylor Love, with offices throughout New Zealand.

Significant Dunedin contracts included the New Zealand the new Arthur Barnett store, the Dunedin Town Hall, New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition, Regent Theatre, and Dunedin's first state houses in Liberton.<sup>13</sup>

### Isaac Stevenson

Isaac Stevenson was the principal of the engineering and shipbuilding firm of Port Chalmers firm Stevenson and Cook. Born in Maybole, Ayrshire, he emigrated with his parents to Geelong, Victoria, settling in Ballarat. Stevenson apprenticed as a boilermaker in Ballarat. He came to Dunedin when he was 21, working with engineering firm Kincaid and McQueen, and later with Morgan and Cable. In 1882 he joined the firm Morgan and MacGregor. On the death of Mr Morgan and the retirement of Mr Cable, Stevenson was left as sole proprietor. In May 1902 John Cook resigned from his position as superintendent of the Union Steam Ship Company and entered into a partnership with Cook as Stevenson and Cook. The firm were ship repairers and buildings, constructing bucket dredges for the goldfields of Otago and Australia. Stevenson was the mayor of Port Chalmers for a period. He was a significant

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/2454> accessed 1 February 2023.

<sup>11</sup> <https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/6245359> ; *New Zealand Herald*, 18 Sep 1944, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.naylorlove.co.nz/about-us/our-history/#:~:text=Love%20Brothers%2C%20later%20the%20Love,the%20company%20for%2058%20years.> Accessed 2 October 2023; <https://www.naylorlove.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/Under-Construction-Magazine-2010-Centennial-Issue.pdf>; <https://www.odt.co.nz/lifestyle/magazine/builders-city>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.odt.co.nz/lifestyle/magazine/builders-city> Originally published 25 Sep 2010, accessed 2 October 2023.

landowner, owning Mount Royal estate at Palmerston, run by one of his sons. He also had business interests in Australia. He was very involved with the Port Chalmers borough and a generous benefactor to the community.<sup>14</sup>

#### Plunket Society

'NZ History' writes that "'Plunket', as the Royal New Zealand Plunket Society came to be popularly known, became a household word in New Zealand. By 1947 the society's nurses saw 85 percent of all new babies, and by 1991 it was up to 92 percent. By 1993 the society had touched the lives of at least three generations of women and their families." By the 1920s the membership of the committees on the whole reflected the make-up of their local, mainly Pākehā communities. By the 1930s there were 125 branches and 700 sub-branches.'<sup>15</sup>

The Plunket Rooms in the new hall were officially opened in July 1939. Mayoress Mrs T Scollay handed the keys to Miss Stevenson, who, in the absence of her father, declared the rooms open. The opening address was given by Plunket's medical advisor Dr Helen Deem. The Dominion president and local president Mrs Ward gave speeches.<sup>16</sup>

The Plunket clinic now operates from Harbour Health in a new building located behind the Pioneer Hall.<sup>17</sup>

## **ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE**

### **HISTORIC/SOCIAL**

The building demonstrates heritage values within this criterion.

The Pioneer Hall has historic and social significance. Built in 1939 as the rooms for the Port Chalmers Old Identities and Early Settlers' Association, the building reflects the emergence of such associations in the late nineteenth century and their development in the twentieth century. The Port Chalmers association was founded in 1913, later transforming into the Port Chalmers Historical Society. The hall has provided a meeting and community space since its opening giving it social significance. It also has significance for its association with Isaac Stevenson who donated the hall to the community, and with Love Construction, a significant Port Chalmers contracting firm, which built the hall.

### **SPIRITUAL/CULTURAL**

The building does not demonstrate heritage values within this criterion.

### **DESIGN**

The building demonstrates heritage values within this criterion.

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<sup>14</sup> *Evening Star*, 10 September 1946, p. 6

<sup>15</sup> <https://nzhistory.govt.nz/women-together/royal-new-zealand-plunket-society> accessed 3 October 2023.

<sup>16</sup> *Evening Star*, 15 Jul 1939, p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.plunket.org.nz/plunket-near-me/port-chalmers-plunket-clinic/> accessed 3 October 2023.

The Pioneer Hall as significance as a Art Deco/Moderne style building designed by Dunedin architectural practice Stone and Sturmer. The Pioneer Hall is a modest example of this style, with Stone and Sturmer known for their striking domestic Art Deco/Moderne designs such as Greenslade House in Vauxhall (1935).

## TECHNOLOGICAL/SCIENTIFIC

The building does not demonstrate heritage values within this criterion.

## REFERENCES

Fiona Hamilton, 'Pioneering History: negotiating pakeha collective memory in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 36, 1 (2002), 66-81

### Newspapers

*Evening Star*, 25 March 1898, p. 4; 27 September 1913, p. 6; 27 September 1913, p. 12; 6 March 1914, p. 4; 10 July 1939, p. 3; 10 September 1946, p. 6

*New Zealand Herald*, 18 Sep 1944, p. 7.

### Websites

<https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/6245359> ;

<https://www.naylorlove.co.nz/about-us/our-history/#:~:text=Love%20Brothers%2C%20later%20the%20Love,the%20company%20for%2058%20years.>

Accessed 2 October 2023

<https://www.naylorlove.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/Under-Construction-Magazine-2010-Centennial-Issue.pdf>; <https://www.odt.co.nz/lifestyle/magazine/builders-city>

<https://www.odt.co.nz/lifestyle/magazine/builders-city> Originally published 25 Sep 2010, accessed 2 October 2023

<https://pioneerhall.org.nz/about/> accessed 2 October 2023

|                                  |                  |                 |    |
|----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|----|
| <b>Date Assessment Completed</b> | 3 October 2023   | <b>Author</b>   | HB |
| <b>Date Peer Reviewed</b>        | 12 December 2023 | <b>Reviewer</b> | MM |
| <b>Date Confirmed Completed</b>  | 19 July 2024     |                 |    |

## APPENDIX



Google Streetview accessed August 2023