

HERITAGE ASSESSMENT FOR SCHEDULED HERITAGE BUILDING: HERCUS BUILDING (UNIVERSITY OF OTAGO MEDICAL SCHOOL)



Google Street View (2020)

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Temporary 2GP Scheduled Heritage Building Reference No:	BX025
Address:	50-58 Hanover Street, Central Dunedin, Dunedin
Located within a Heritage Precinct:	No
HNZPT List Reference & Description:	N/A
Heritage Covenant:	No
Building Use at Time of Record:	Educational
Condition of Property:	Building not known to be at risk due to 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 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, including the Richard Gross sculptural relief panel, excluding steel framed windows on the rear elevation, roof plant, and aerial walkway
✓	External/ancillary elements	Richard Gross sculptural relief panel
	Internal elements and/or rooms	Nil
✓	Excluded elements	Roof plant and aerial walkway (connecting to Scott Building), steel framed windows on the rear (north) elevation

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Hercus building has heritage significance to Dunedin. The building was erected in the late 1940s to the design of local firm Miller and White in keeping with the classical styling of neighbouring medical school buildings (Scott and Lindo Ferguson Buildings). The Hercus Building has historic and social significance for its association with Sir Charles Hercus and the development of the University of Otago's Medical School and design significance as a Streamline Moderne style building that retains a high level of exterior authenticity and integrity built by a consortium of significant local contractors.

The Hercus Building 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	Post War (1945-1955)
Style	Streamline Moderne
Era/Date of Construction	1944-48
Architect/Designer/Builder	Miller & White, architects; Richard Gross, sculptor; Associated Builders, contractors
Historic Use & Cultural Associations	Medical education facility
Primary Construction Materials	Reinforced concrete, brick, glass blocks, steel-framed windows.
Notable Architectural Characteristics	Typical Moderne form and detailing

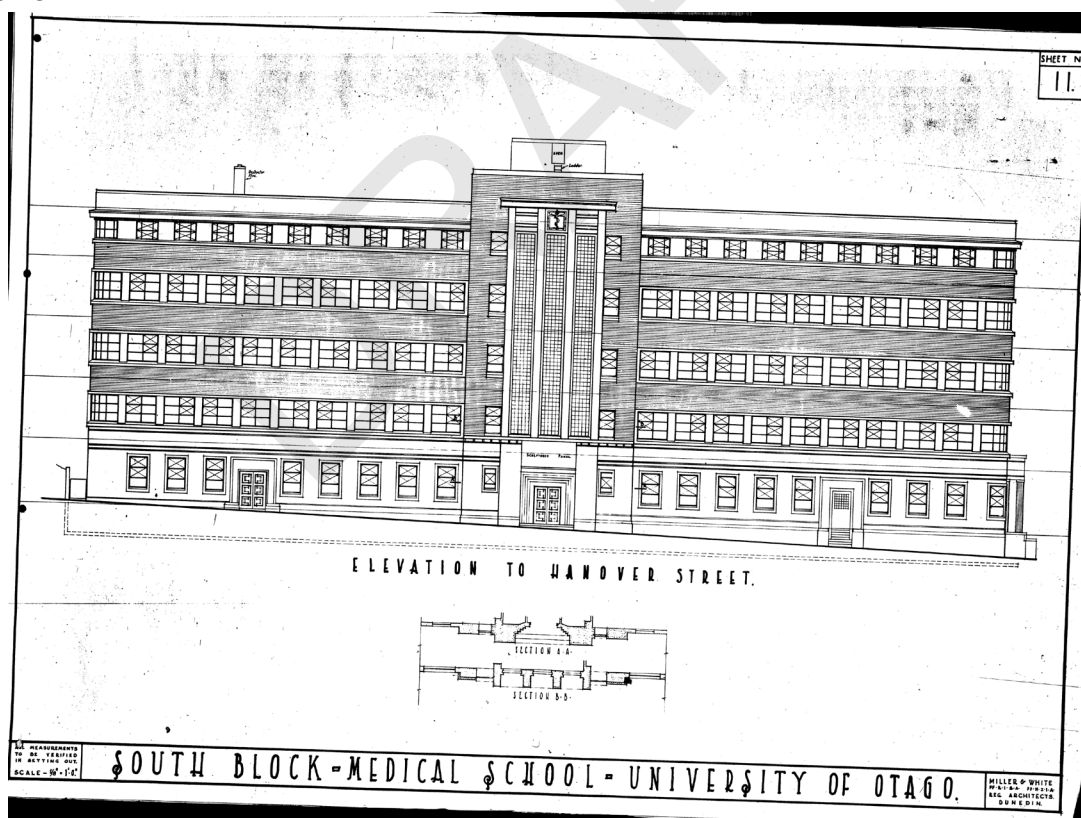
Previous site development

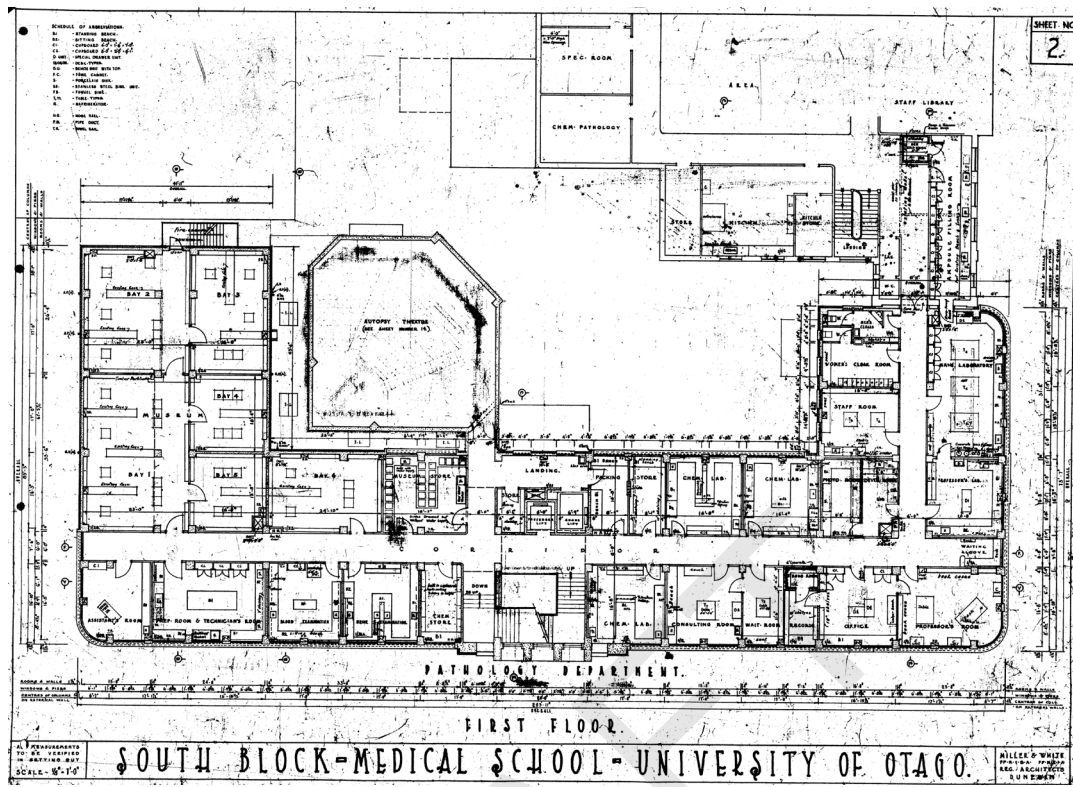
Historic aerials and survey plans show that there were several buildings on the subject site before the Hercus Building was erected.

Building design and construction

The new south block of the University of Otago Medical School was opened by Terry McCombs, the Minister of Education, on 8 September 1948. Until it was named in honour of Sir Charles Hercus, the building was referred to as part of the medical school's south block cluster, which also included the Scott (1917) and Ferguson (1927) buildings on Great King Street. The contractors for the new block were made up of a consortium of Love Construction Company, WH Naylor, William McLellan Ltd & Mitchell Brothers Ltd. Local architects Miller and White designed the building.

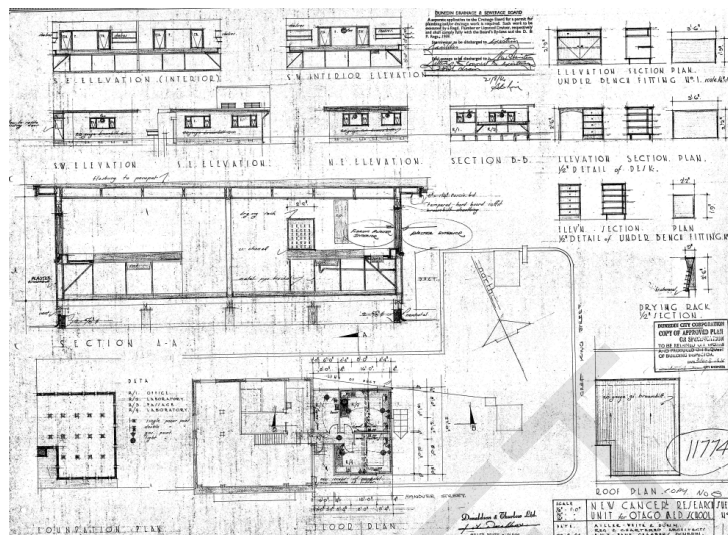
As planned the floors of the Hercus Building were set aside for specific medical departments: on the ground floor were to be the city morgue pathology department and preventative medicine; on the first the pathology department; on the second floor the bacteriology department; research laboratories on the third floor; and on the fourth-floor animal research. The new building was linked to the Scott building at the former's north-east corner.





The new south block under construction. Hocken Collections, University of Otago.

In 1964 plans were submitted to alter the building to accommodate a new cancer research unit on the building's roof; Miller, White and Dunn were the architects.

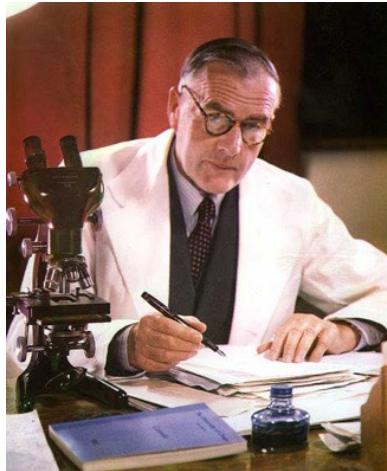


The DCC also holds drawings for internal alterations to the building dated 1965, and a 1989 building permit application lodged by Naylor Love Construction for building alterations and upgrades. Today, the building still houses the Otago Medical School's Department of Pathology and maintains the connection with animal research through the Otago Zebrafish Facility.

Sir Charles Hercus

As a man he has been described as the School's gladiator. In a period demanding expansion of buildings and other facilities the office of Dean was one of great responsibility, carrying with it the unenviable task of adjudicating between competing individuals and departments. At a time when the Otago Medical School was the only medical school in New Zealand the ratio of the number of students to the number of hospital patients became excessive. Sir Charles was responsible for an arrangement by which final year students were subdivided between four main centres, Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin, so providing them with wider clinical opportunities. At each of the four centres there was a branch of the medical faculty and these branch faculties attracted excellent clinicians, and later acquired wholtime

medical and surgical units, which furthered both teaching and research. On these foundations a second full medical school has developed in Auckland, and clinical schools have been set up in Christchurch and Wellington. [Sir F Horace Smirk 'Inspiring physicians – Sir Charles Ernest Hercus' *Royal College of Physicians*].



Sir Charles Hercus in the 1950s.

Miller and White

The architectural practice of Miller and White was established by Eric Miller and James Hodge White in 1927; the records of the firm, and its successors, were gifted to the Hocken Library by Rodney Dalziel after his retirement in 1997. Among the firm's most notable commissions was the Methodist Centennial Memorial Church at Otakou (1940-41). Miller (c.1896-1948) and White (1896-70) were architects to the University of Otago and designed a wide range of commercial, ecclesiastical, and residential buildings in the city.

Contractors: the building was constructed by a consortium of local contractors

Naylor Love Ltd – Love Construction and WH Naylor

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.¹² 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.¹

WH Naylor

Clyde-born Hugh Naylor was apprenticed as a carpenter before moving to Dunedin. He built his first house in Portobello in 1901. Naylor initially specialised in house building and repairs but extended his work into

¹ <https://www.odt.co.nz/lifestyle/magazine/builders-city> Originally published 25 Sep 2010, accessed 2 October 2023.

commercial construction. He built the Bank of New Zealand in Mosgiel in 1917, the University of Otago Dental School in 1925, the Evening Star Building in 1927, and Mater (Mercy) Hospital in 1969. His son Ben joined the company in 1948, heading WH Naylor, then Naylor Love from 1957-1987, remaining on the Board after his retirement.²

ASSESSMENT OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

HISTORIC/SOCIAL

The building demonstrates heritage values within this criterion. The Hercus Building has significance under this criterion for its association with Sir Charles Hercus, and the Otago Medical School and its ongoing development through the latter half of the 20th century. The building represents the medical school's commitment to research and public health, which were fostered by Dean Hercus, after whom the building was later named.

SPIRITUAL/CULTURAL

The building does not demonstrate heritage values within this criterion.

DESIGN

The building demonstrates heritage values within this criterion. Aside from the removal of a secondary entry towards the west end of the Hanover Street frontage, the building bears a very close resemblance to the design created by Miller and White in 1944. The building has further design significance for the way in which it continues the classical architectural vocabulary that was established by the earlier 20th century Great King Street medical school buildings but updates it in line with mid-20th century conventions.

TECHNOLOGICAL/SCIENTIFIC

The building does not demonstrate heritage values within this criterion.

REFERENCES

Otago Daily Times 29 January 1947, p. 4; 19 April 1947, p. 8; 8 September 1948, p. 6; 9 September 1948, p. 8.
Evening Star 20 June 1946, p. 6; 28 July 1947, p. 6.

<https://otago150years.wordpress.com/2017/03/13/building-a-medical-campus/>

Sir Charles Hercus:

<https://teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/4h28/hercus-charles-ernest>

<https://ir.canterbury.ac.nz/handle/10092/9538>

² <https://www.naylorlove.co.nz/about-us/our-history/>; <https://www.naylorlove.co.nz/about-us/timeline/>
accessed 31 July 2024.

<https://history.rcplondon.ac.uk/inspiring-physicians/sir-charles-ernest-hercus>

Miller & White:

https://www.otago.ac.nz/library/pdf/hoc_fr_bulletins/Bull_60_Architects.pdf

Date Initial Assessment Completed	13 December 2022	Author	AM
Date Peer Reviewed	18 July 2023	Reviewer	HB
Date Peer Reviewed	21 June 2024	Reviewer	MM
Date Confirmed Complete	31 July 2024		
Revised 'Recommended Protection'	26 August 2024		

DRAFT