

VICTORIA THEATRE DEVONPORT

A CONSERVATION PLAN



the
VICTORIA THEATRE
Victoria Road
Devonport
North Shore City

a
Conservation Plan



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INTRODUCTION

The Victoria Theatre in Devonport, North Shore City, was erected as a Cinema in the early years of the 20th century. It is believed to be the oldest purpose-built cinema building still standing in New Zealand. The theatre was significantly enlarged in the late 1920s, and its interior was substantially reorganised in a further renovation in the 1990s.

The property has had a number of owners in the past almost 100 years, and for the past decade has struggled, under various operators, for commercial success in an age of competing modes of entertainment. The Victoria current functions as both cinema and live theatre under the interim management of the Victoria Theatre Trust. The adaptation of the building for use for live entertainment has shown it to have a number of functional shortcomings - in particular, virtually no back stage facilities.

The particular appeal of a building such as the Victoria Theatre lies substantially in its authenticity as an "old fashioned cinema", but also in its location in the suburb of Devonport, where it makes a major contribution to the character of the central business district, and constitutes an opportunity for a continuing and valuable social service. In an age of highly competitive mass market personal entertainment, there is a strong and growing public fondness for the enjoyment of cinema in the tradition of the 20th century, when an important part of the experience of "going to the pictures" was the setting.

PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This document is a Conservation Plan. It is a statement about the significance of the Victoria Theatre building as a part of the heritage of Devonport and the North Shore, and is intended to assist with the conservation and maintenance of the building. The plan outlines suggested policies for the conservation of the building, and for the management of change to recover its original configuration while incorporating improved public amenities, and addressing maintenance and building code matters where these arise. The plan identifies appropriate processes and procedures for this purpose and encourages the preservation and conservation of existing original parts of the building, as these are considered to have special significance due to their association with those who built and used it.

The building is generally sound, although some attention is required to remedial work to exclude water and repair water damage. In spite of a recent history of only occasional use, the building has been maintained in reasonable condition. Recent changes have, however, altered the original appearance of its principal interior space - the auditorium. While this may have diminished its intrinsic character, the changes are capable of being reversed.

The Victoria Theatre has recently been purchased by the North Shore City Council, which proposes to again seal the building subject to covenants intended to preserve the building and to its heritage values.



Prior to its purchase by the Council, the Victoria Theatre Trust operated the building for a period of several months. During that period, the Trust commissioned this conservation plan to further the objective of its preservation and continuing use as a cinema, and also to promote its adaptation for use as a live performance venue.

The Trust seeks to acquire the building. In this event, the Trust proposes to return the building to its original configuration as a single auditorium, but requires also the retention and enlargement of the existing "George" cinema, relocated to the upper part of the auditorium, thus allowing recovery of the circle lounge at first floor level. The Trust wishes also to adapt the building to provide for live performances, and this use may require some alteration to provide necessary amenities for that purpose. In this event, the conservation of the building would need to acknowledge those demands as an integral part of its continued use and vitality.

BRIEF

Salmond Reed Architects was commissioned to prepare this conservation plan in July 2005 by the Victoria Theatre Trust (Inc), under a grant from the North Shore Heritage Trust. The brief required a conservation plan to be professionally prepared to meet a standard acceptable to statutory authorities and to provide guidance on the refurbishment of the building so that it can once more function on a fully commercial basis as a key element of the North Shore's entertainment landscape.

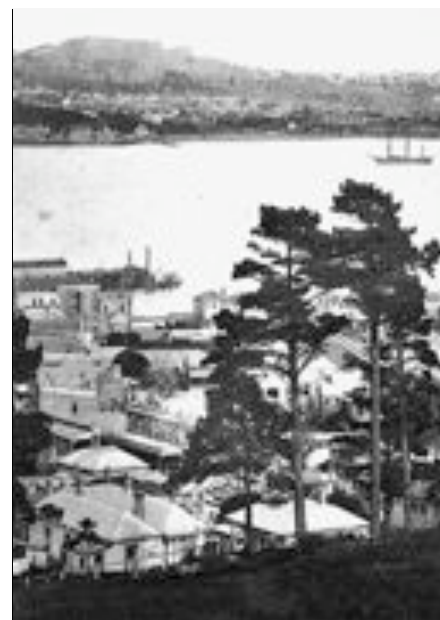
METHODOLOGY

This document is modelled on the method developed in Sydney by Dr J.S. Kerr for the preparation of conservation plans. In particular, the method of establishing cultural heritage significance and the articulation of conservation policy, have been influenced by Dr Kerr's most recent work.¹ Guidelines prepared for such work by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust have also been consulted.

The conservation plan adopts a discursive approach to the development of policy, which is intended to identify specific actions to address conservation requirements. The plan sets out to examine conservation issues which will affect the future of the building. This is approached through an examination of the past history of the site, and an assessment of cultural heritage values which have been identified.

Statutory and District Plan requirements are reviewed, along with obligations under the Building Act and other code compliance issues. In the light of these inquiries, a set of policies is advanced for the conservation of the key heritage features of the building to provide a process for dealing with physical change, and to facilitate its future management as a heritage place in a commercial environment.

¹ Kerr, 1996



IDENTITY OF CONTRIBUTORS

This study is the work of Salmond Reed Architects, practising as conservation architects in Devonport, Auckland, New Zealand. Historical research for the project has been carried out by Susan Yoffe, who prepared the historical narrative.

The assessments of significance and the architectural analysis of the building have been carried out by Jeremy Salmond.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Considerable assistance has been provided by others in the preparation of this report. We are grateful for permission to reproduce photographs from the collections of the Devonport Public Library and the Devonport Museum.

Previous studies of the building are also acknowledged, including a feasibility study and assessment of heritage values in the building prepared by Archifact Limited for North Shore City Council; and an engineering assessment prepared in 2004 by Airey Associates, in connection with a proposed redevelopment of the building.

The Authors acknowledge with appreciation two peer reviews of drafts of this report carried out by Heike Lutz-Strulik on behalf of the North Shore Heritage Trust (Inc.)


The company thanks members of the Victoria Theatre Trust for access to documents and to the building, for their enthusiastic support of the project, and for recognising the essential necessity of having regard to the heritage significance of this building in returning it to sound and energetic use as a place of public entertainment.



HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Barfoot & Thompson **TENDER**

DEVONPORT
48 - 56 VICTORIA ROAD
"VICTORIA & ALBERT CINEMAS"
MAIN STREET COMMERCIAL BUILDING
TWIN CINEMA PLUS LEASED RETAIL SHOP



SALE OF FREEHOLD AND BUSINESS CHATTELS
Landmark building dominates Devonports CBD skyline. Attractively refurbished, consisting of 2 separate 280 seat cinemas (one adapted for live theatre productions or film) licensed wine bar, candy bar and separate leased retail shop. FREEHOLD available with or without full twin cinema operating equipment which is available by separate tender. Whole operation ready to roll from day 1.

INSPECTION BY APPOINTMENT
DEVONPORT BRANCH 445-2010
ALLAN WHEATLEY ah 489-6593

TENDERS CLOSE 4pm - TUESDAY 8th SEPTEMBER 1992
(or favourable prior offers considered)

The Victoria Theatre is a prominent building standing at the northern entrance to the commercial centre of Devonport. Since the opening of the original building in 1912 it has been a visual and social focus for the people of Devonport. Fondly remembered as a centre for fun, fantasy and romance, it is an object of some affection in the community. The *Victoria* enjoyed sustained commercial success through the heyday of cinema in New Zealand, and underwent major renovations in 1929 and 1990. With changing social practices, it fell on hard times in the 1980s, and since then there have been several attempts at revival by volunteers from the community. These efforts attest to the place this fine building holds in the hearts of the community, and to its potential as a place of continuing public entertainment.

LAND OWNERSHIP

The Commercial centre of Devonport occupies land originally settled under Crown Grants over a period from 1850 to 1869. The Victoria Theatre sits on part of W. Oliver's grant 5G.418 issued in 1851 over lot 20a - an area of 7 acres 0 roods and 13 perches - for a purchase cost of £49.11.4.

Oliver sold the property on to Duder in 1868, and it was again sold, to Rattray in 1872, who transferred it in the same year to Buchanan. The names of all these owners are memorialised in adjacent Devonport streets.

Later owners included MacDonald, Carruth, Dunning and Martha Inger, wife of George E. Inger builder. Mrs Inger sold the property to Mary Benwell in September 1912 for £1,340, and a mortgage of £6,500 is recorded in favour of E.R. James - also a builder - who constructed a new theatre building on the site for the Benwells.



Figure 1 The Victoria Theatre, viewed from the Devonport wharf ca 1913, APL:A4339



Figure 2 A view of the Devonport centre ca 1860 - the trees behind the buildings in the left foreground approximate the theatre site



Figure 3 Benwell's Clarence Street Cinema on opening day, 21 December 1911



Figure 4 a hazy view of J.L. Benwell taken from figure 5

THE FIRST PICTURE THEATRE

By the first decade of the twentieth century Devonport was a well developed retail and commercial centre. Its increasing importance following the establishment of Auckland was due to the siting of the important signal station on Mount Victoria, and later the establishment of a naval base in the settlement. Devonport became a Borough in 1886, by which time it was established as the principal landing place on the North Shore of the Waitemata Harbour for overland traffic to the north. With a resident population of over 7,000, the community was well able to support the growing entertainment trend of cinema.

Under the slogan "RAIN OR SHINE, "BENWELL'S PICTURES EVERY TIME.", Devonport's (and the North Shore's) first cinema, Benwell's Picture Palace, opened in 1911 in a draughty hall in Clarence Street, (**fig.3**) on the site of the later telephone exchange (now the Stone Oven Café). John Leon Benwell (**fig.4**) was an American who migrated to New Zealand with his wife Mary Angeline and three sons via Rarotonga in 1910. He settled in Ewen Alison Avenue in Devonport, and according to his sons, he built the Forresters Hall in Wellesley Street Auckland - the first continuous moving picture theatre in the country. (NSTA 9.5.62)

There is some disagreement over the name of the Clarence Street building -Hayward (p.6) names it as "*The Queen's*"; Frank Broad says it was the old Federal Hall. (NZSB 7.3.1964) In any event, the hall was too small and unsuited to the purpose. (PT) The building burnt down on Christmas Eve 1911, taking everything Benwell had. (CG)

Undaunted by his loss, he decided to erect a purpose-built theatre. With only £25 to invest, however, '*he raised a note and borrowed from every Tom, Dick and Harry in Devonport*', (NSTA 9.5.62) and the builder, Edward Roy James, was the mortgagee for the contract amount of £6,500. (CG) He commissioned the Auckland architect John Walker to design a new theatre in Victoria Road. (**fig.5-7**) Walker designed a theatre that could comfortably seat 1,000 people. (CG)

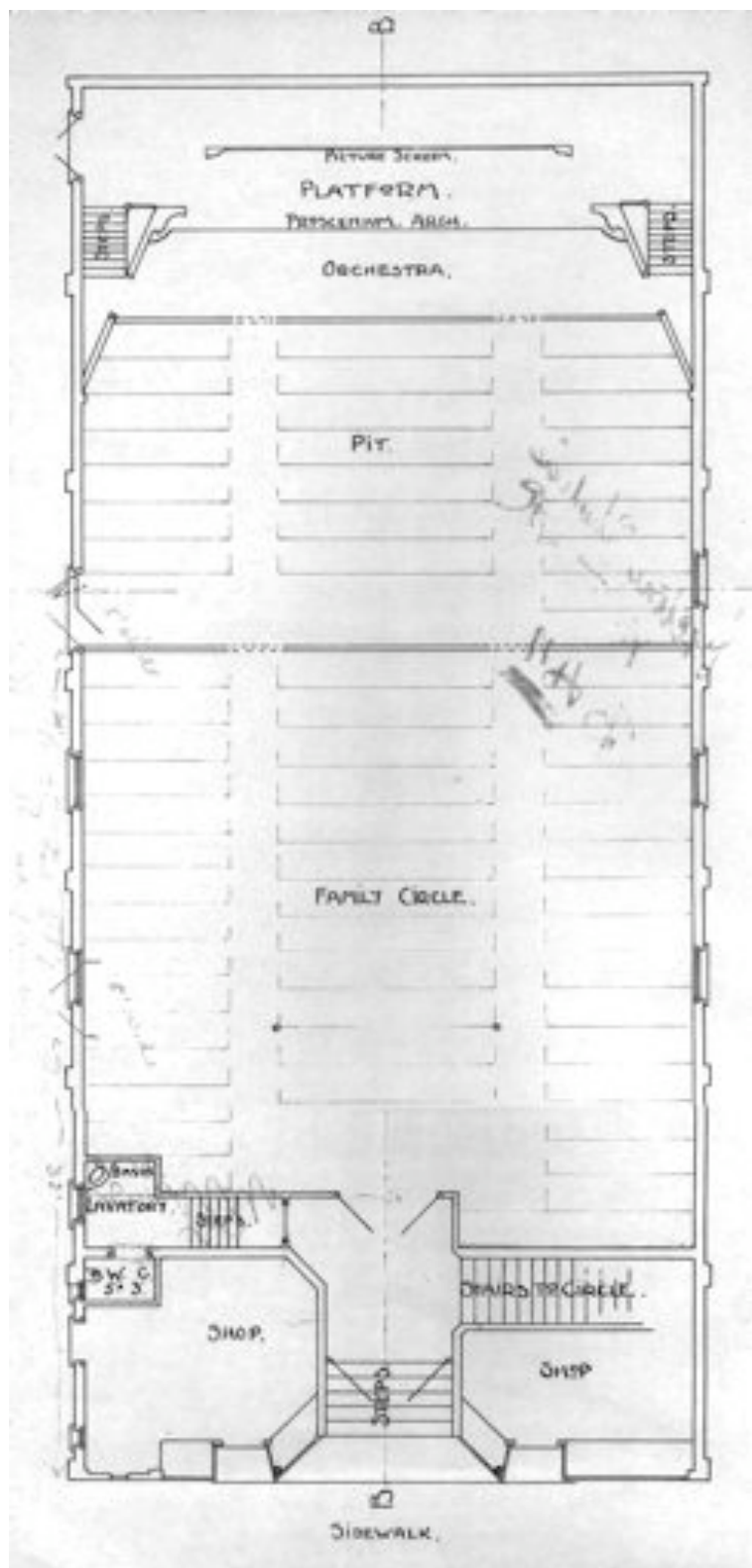


Figure 5 John Walker's plan for Benwell's Victoria Theatre, 1912, North Shore City Council Archives



Figure 7 Walker's street elevation for the Theatre building, (nd)

The interior décor (**fig.8**) echoed the elaborate theatres of an earlier period such as His Majesty's, (1902) with moulded plaster ornamentation on the ceiling, walls and circle balcony. The dress circle seats were "*handsomely upholstered in green plush, each seat being fitted with a hat rack.*" The wood furnishings were mahogany.(CG) The new Victoria Theatre opened on 26

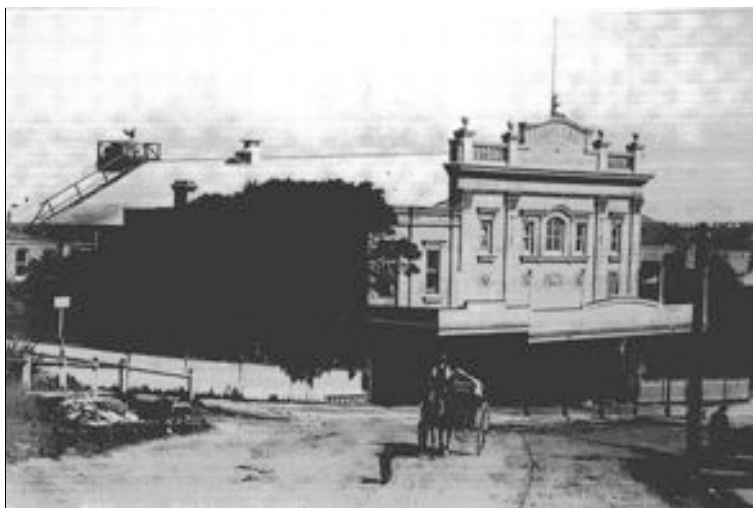


Figure 6 Victoria Theatre building of 1912, viewed from upper Victoria Road

October 1912.

The Victoria Theatre, Devonport. Benwell's Model Picture Palace opens today with a full 40 performers the A.M.R. Band by special permission of Col?? Field. (NZ Herald 26.10.1912)

The *Herald* reported that the free children's concert in the afternoon preceding the official opening was crowded. The A.M.R. band played prior to the evening's proceedings and the Mayor, William Handley, opened the theatre declaring it to be, "*... a palace of amusement equal to any theatre in the Dominion*" A first class programme of pictures was then screened. An orchestra of five supplied appropriate music during the entertainments'. (NZ Herald 28.10.1912)



Figure 8 Victoria Theatre opening day, 26 October 1912 - John Benwell standing centre right

Benwell promoted his business by running all sorts of other entertainments, including baby contests, rhyming contests and benefit concerts for the police and firemen of Devonport. (CG) Going to the pictures was a weekly event - especially the children's matinee on Saturdays;

The children used to clap and stamp their feet as soon as the lights were dimmed and Miss Precey from the sweet shop across the road walked down the aisle towards the piano which she played real loud when the Indians were coming and then she would play softly.'
Joyce Hitchen (CG)

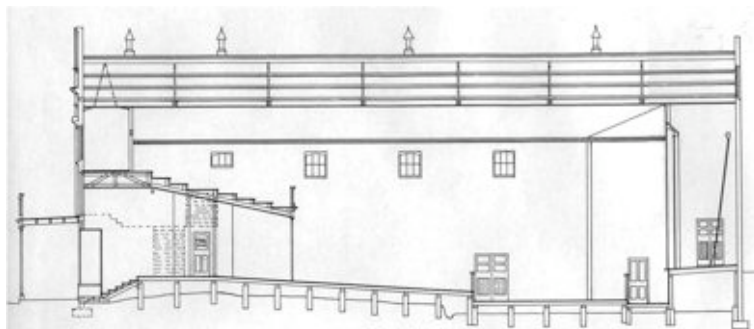


Figure 9 long section through the 1912 building

Always the showman Benwell kept monkeys in cages over the verandah, and these occasionally got loose. When reproached by the Council, Benwell is reported to have said "Don't be hard on the monkeys, after all, they're only human". (NSTA 9.5.62)

He was also a businessman. The street level premises were leased - the uphill offices occupied by *The North Shore Gazette & Victoria Theatre Courier*, published by Mr T. Martin. (fig.10) The theatre was well promoted in this paper (and this continued for more than twenty years). The city papers also carried advertisements for the theatre, and billboards were widely used, particularly on the ferry wharf. The *Gazette* was later taken over by Mr T. Proctor, who transferred operations to the aptly named Fleet St. (PT)



Figure 10 The original Theatre, with offices on the ground floor

Benwell's motto, which was well known to all Devonport people, reflects his enterprising attitude to his trade:

'Here we have what leisure hours demand, amusement and instruction hand in hand.' (PT)

John Benwell finally returned to his roots and a family in California. He sold the Victoria Theatre to Fullers-Hayward, with Fred Miller as manager on 31 May 1914 - one day before the declaration of the first World War. Because of this he decided the voyage would be unsafe, and instead moved to Whangarei, where he started another theatre. Returning to Auckland, he opened the Theatre Royal in Kingsland, doing most of the building with his own hands. In 1918 he finally returned to the U.S.A., a wealthy man. He bought an oil well in Long Beach California and built up a considerable fortune in this new calling. (obit. *Akl Star* 1 March 1934)

FULLER HAYWARDS

Fuller Haywards was an amalgamation of two arch rivals in the picture distribution business - John Fuller & Sons Ltd and Hayward's Enterprises. The two companies combined in April 1913 to form New Zealand Picture Supplies, with Henry Hayward as Managing Director and the three Fuller brothers - Benjamin (later Sir Benjamin), John and Walter - as directors. The Victoria was one of the first acquisitions of the new company. (CG)

Two petrol engines for electric power generation were installed. These were named 'John Bull' and 'Uncle Sam', and remained in use until power became available from the Devonport Borough Council's municipal power plant in Church Street. A somewhat unreliable urban myth maintains that the Victoria Theatre burnt down in 1924, and that films were shown temporarily in the Anglican parish hall in Church Street. The story states that this was named the Midway Theatre for that purpose, and was managed by Mr C.E. Mackie. (PT) It is also stated that the Midway closed in 1925, when the Victoria Theatre re-opened. (NSTA 9.9.1975) Notwithstanding this story, there is no evidence in the building of a fire, and the *Victoria Theatre Chronicle* continued to be published throughout 1924 with no mention of a fire, and no break in advertised screenings. Nor is there any mention in the records of Devonport Borough Council of modification between the addition of a fire escape in 1920 and major reconstruction in 1929. (Flagstaff 21 October 1993)

A NEW THEATRE

In 1929, at the height of the talkie boom, and at the beginning of a depression, Fuller-Haywards engaged Auckland architect Daniel B. Patterson to undertake a major restructuring of the theatre. It is probable that Patterson was chosen since he had been responsible for a 1926 addition to another of the company's theatres - the Kings Theatre, in Karangahape Road.



Figure 11 The circle in the enlarged theatre, *Devonport Museum*



Figure 12 Patterson's street elevation for the enlarged theatre building, 1929

The expansion resulted in a much enlarged auditorium - wider and taller, with an extended gallery - or "circle". (**fig.11**) The greatly heightened street façade became a local landmark, clearly visible from the harbour. The small publishing building on the north side was incorporated into the new building, and became the location of the new public entrance. (**fig.12**) Patterson shortened the auditorium to make a main foyer with a barrel vaulted ceiling over the stair leading up to the circle foyer. (**fig.13,14**)



Figure 13 The circle foyer, *Devonport Museum*

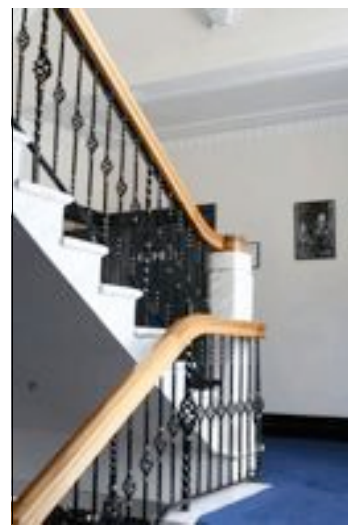


Figure 14 The same view today, from the main staircase

To the south of the new entrance, three shops step down with the descending street footpath outside. A newspaper description noted that,

'simplicity is the keynote of the design of the architect, Mr Daniel B. Patterson. An attractive entrance opens to

the stalls and slightly below the dress circle doors is a tastefully furnished lounge. The colour scheme is based on a soft cream and the walls are panelled with fabric. Modernistic lights, in the form of upturned umbrellas hang from the ceilings. The same type of seat has been fitted throughout the house. Cutone 'talkie' equipment has been installed and sound pictures will be screened with three changes a week.' (quoted in JG)

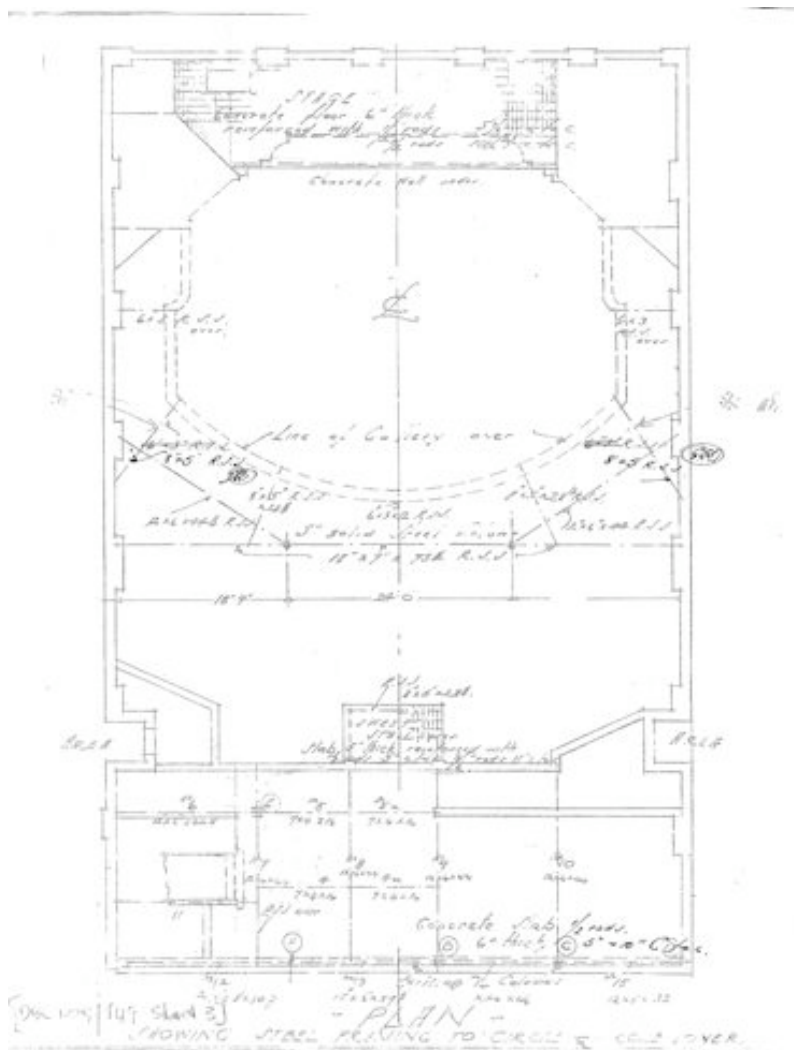


Figure 15 Daniel B. Patterson's plan for an enlarged Victoria Theatre, 1929, North Shore City Council Archives

The remodelling was a victim of the October 1929 depression - 'the incredibly detailed interior was luckily finished, but the exterior was only whitewashed', and remained that way until the renovations of 1988. (Nathan Haines Sunday News, undated)

In opening the refurbished theatre, the Deputy Mayor Mr J. Hislop said that it was the finest suburban theatre in the Dominion and the largest North of Auckland. (JG) The programme for that night proclaimed:

Tonight at 8pm D.W. Griffiths' 'Three Passions' with
Shayle Gardner and Alice Terry. The wild fierce
abandon of jazz-mad moderns runs riot in this pulsating

drama of today also Albert Spalding Violinist. The Four Aristocrats Instrumentalists and syncopators.
(quoted in JG not referenced)

The Depression of the late '20s and '30s affected cinema-going throughout the country, and Fuller-Haywards became a casualty of this when they ceased business in 1930. The Victoria Theatre was taken over by debenture holders until the end of the Depression, when Fullers again resumed ownership as the Fuller Theatre Corporation. They continued to operate the theatre until 1945, when it was sold to R.J. Kerridge, who ran it under the auspices of Kerridge Odeon Corporation Ltd. (*The Vic*)

For the next forty years, the Devonport public enjoyed two cinemas – the State theatre across the road was built in 1927 (**fig.16**) - and the post-war recovery of the late 1940s and 1950s gradually brought back the audiences. Devonport was quietly growing, with community life centred on clubs, schools, church and service organizations, and many people had permanently booked seats for Saturday nights. With the introduction of television in 1960, however, another source of entertainment located in the home offered irresistible competition. By the mid-70s attendance at both cinemas was falling and, in 1976, the State closed and was sold to a church group. In July 1986 Victoria Theatre was put up for sale (*NSTA* 3.7.1986)



Figure 16 The expanded Victoria Theatre, showing also the State Theatre of 1929, opposite, ca. 1960s

THE STRUGGLE

Even before the closure of the theatre, there had been rumours of closure and sale, and a group of concerned Devonport residents formed the Victoria Theatre Trust, with Ron Walsby as chairman. The aim was to ensure a viable future for the cinema, and the building's survival as a valuable landmark in Devonport. Donations were pledged towards turning the theatre into a community facility 'for performing arts, amateur and professional plays, local club and organization usages for meetings, seminars, lectures, exhibitions and so on'. (Ron Walsby, quoted in *NSTA* 14.11.1989)

The Trust embarked on fund-raising, put out flyers, and sought assistance with the purchase of the building. Pacer Kerridge were sympathetic and employed John Hulbert (who had some experience in refurbishing old buildings) to produce plans and costs for the purchase and rehabilitation of the theatre as an all-purpose entertainment centre. The cost of the necessary structural alterations were estimated to be \$700,000. The Devonport Borough Council gave moral support to the concept, but no financial commitment. Kerridge then agreed to take the Victoria off the market and the Trust was given a two month extension in which to find \$250,00 to buy the building.

In March 1987 the Victoria Theatre Trust, hoping to attract corporate sponsorship sent a professionally produced proposal document - 'A Concept' - to 100 corporate organisations. This sparked some interest and many good wishes, but no money. The Northern Regional Arts Council granted \$1,500 for a feasibility study. (Letter 14.10.1986) The engineering firm of Martin, Symes & Gunn surveyed the building and valued the building at \$380,000, with necessary alterations estimated to cost \$390-460,000. (Letter 9.9.1986) Local architect Kelvin Grant, offered his services free to draw up conceptual plans.

Nevertheless, after 18 months of sustained and determined effort, the Trust had raised only \$25,000 - \$30,000 - nowhere near enough. Eventually, on 4 February 1988, Kerridge closed the theatre, with the last screening being *Ben Hur*, followed by an after-show party for past and present staff. (The Vic)

CHARLEY GRAY'S

Charley Gray founded his company in early 1986 with a 70% share, and financial backing from publisher Bruce Palmer. Based at Balmoral's *Capital* theatre, Charley Gray's developed a strong following as a repertory cinema showing alternatives to the chain distributed commercial movies. Charley Gray's appealed to devotees of 'art' and festival films.

In 1988, Bruce Palmer, publisher become movie mogul, acquired the remaining interest of Charley Gray Ltd. With the idea of expanding the concept, Palmer purchased the Victoria Theatre building from Pacer Kerridge and the Vic became *Charley Gray's Twin Cinemas Devonport*.

Working with architects David Hunt and Graham Diver of Adams Langley, Palmer decided to convert the building into two cinemas – the Victoria upstairs and the Albert below - at a cost of \$1 million. The multiplex was already developing as a way of providing smaller more intimate cinemas showing different films, within a single building complex. Palmer said at the time that people need to be educated to the 'art' market, and that the films would reflect the differing audience preferences between the city side and the North Shore. "About a third of Devonport's population is retired and there are more families in the North Shore area", he claimed. He saw his competition as being not with the big chains, but with other independents.

The building had been standing empty for 18 months, and in decline for a decade or more before that. With the removal of years of additions, traces of the 1929 furnishings were uncovered.



Under several layers of carpets in the upstairs foyer, quality original floor coverings came to light. When the heavy drapes that cloaked the main auditorium walls were removed they revealed panels painted in pastel colours.

The building was converted into two cinemas by separating the original stalls and the circle with an extended floor connected to a new fire-proof partition built over a transverse steel truss. The existing projection room was retained in the Victoria upstairs, while in the new downstairs cinema, renamed the "Albert" a new projection box was constructed underneath the circle, and the original ground floor was raised. [fig.17] The new cinemas seated 280 each.



Figure 17 The auditorium of the Albert today showing the overhang of the Victoria theatre above

The contractor, Hanlon Construction, completed the retrofitting of the cinema in only nine weeks – but they were seven day weeks. Replication of decorative features from the 1929 theatre brought a lot of attention and publicity, focussed particularly on the claimed similarity to overseas examples in the Art Deco tradition. Trends magazine ran four pages on the decor and remodelling. The colour scheme was adventurous – the use of pastel red, blue, green, violet and yellow on the façade was described as "Miami sea-side art deco". [NZ Commercial Design Trends Vol.2.No.3 1990] [fig.18.19]



Figure 18 detail of the interior moulded cornice and the present colour scheme.



Figure 19 section of moulded cornice untouched in the redecoration.

The Council initially objected to the pastel exterior colours as they did not 'fit in' with the Victoriana of the street, but were persuaded that they were in keeping with art deco theme.

A novel feature was the 'crying room' at the back of the Victoria. It was fitted with comfortable arm chairs and seats six adults. The room with its own sound system, allowed parents with young children to enjoy films in private. [fig.20] The first liquor licence in a cinema in New Zealand was granted for a bar on the mezzanine. This was intended to enhance the evening's experience, rather than as a casual bar.

Ceilings were reproduced in moulded fibrous plaster in the decorative style of the original. [fig.21] The original seats were removed and re-upholstered, paint was removed from kauri armrests and the cast-iron sides of the seats were acid stripped. The windows on the road frontage were glazed in stained glass. (NSTA 14.11.1989)

The original waterfall curtain was taken down. Being old, and covered with soot from the cinema's oil heater, it crumbled to pieces and was replaced with a faithful replica.

Charley Gray's Twin Cinemas opened on 26 January 1990 with an 'invitation only' 'spectacular'. At the opening a jazz band played outside and a juggler mingled amongst the crowd in the foyer. Theatresport Auckland were the first item, providing a "flash back" to the vaudeville performance before the film in the early days of cinema. (Ak. Star, 31.1.1990)

It was planned that the Victoria Theatre Trust would use the Albert for live performance.

'The trust is not only a fundraising organisation, it's now an integral part of the Victoria and Albert organization. Although the building has been bought by the Charley Gray company, live performances are the responsibility of the Trust, a generous gesture by the management' (NSTA 14.11.1989)

The building came alive again. The Devonport Theatre Company was founded by Dick Mells to provide a professional theatre environment for productions both amateur and professional. The Albert became a venue for fashion parades, protest meetings and political meetings. Unfortunately, the good times did not last long, and the doors closed once again in July 1992. [Flagstaff 19 November 1992] There were many reasons given for the closure – decline in patronage and poor management among them. [The Vic]

In May 1993 a new charitable trust was formed to buy the theatre, with Jim Mason as the head. \$150,000 was needed to reach the \$700,000 asking price for the building (NSTA 13.05.1993). Mr Mason envisaged the Albert being used for theatresports, live entertainment, and films at lunchtime for senior citizens. 'The theatre could become a virtual community centre' he said. [NSTA 13.5.1993] Again, there was much enthusiasm but little forthcoming in the way of finances. [fig.22]

The building was put up for sale for development as apartments or for the site – meaning demolition of the historic building. Derek Singleton was appointed as agent for a sale. No one wanted the building demolished, but there were major hurdles to its



Figure 20 The "crying room" at the back of the Victoria auditorium - art without tears

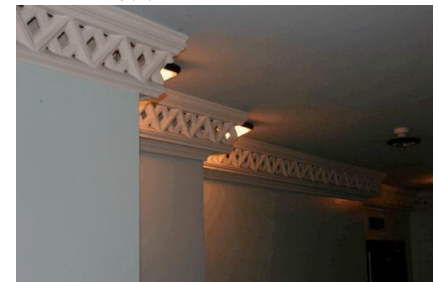


Figure 21 detail of the moulded cornice in the Albert



Figure 22 poster promoting support for refurbishing the Vic



successful preservation. Singleton and Mason signed a contract, with possession on 26 March 1993. Consent for alterations was granted in April and May and by mid year the new owners had formed a company, found finance and put together a deal to buy the theatre. Victoria Theatre Ltd. came into possession on 19 November 1993. The name reverted to Victoria Theatre.

One major concern of the new owners was the seating:

The Vic's seats are mainly in a stage of terminal decay after untold years and thousands of posteriors. [NSTA 29.10.1993]

Slowly, the new enterprise began to show a profit. Continuous 24 hour screenings were staged for the New Zealand opening of Jurassic Park. Mark Hadlow performed 'The Sensitive New Age Guy', and Flying Pictures turned on a fantastic laser show. The old circle lounge was converted to a third intimate cinema, and the marginal profit from this transformed the financial basis of the whole operation. The jewellery shop was turned into a licensed bar. The business was a success. [The Vic]

The Victoria was sold to Carl Rusher and Mike Steeneveld in April 1996 as a successful going concern. Again the good times were short lived. The name was changed yet again, to "DC3" (Devonport Cinemas Three). The bar was re-named Oscar's (after the cat), but the receipt of a lawyer's letter from the institution which runs the Academy Awards in Hollywood forced a change to Bar3 - an international triumph of copyright protection. [The Vic]

Major refurbishment was undertaken in April 1997. Carpets were lifted to reveal beautiful rimu flooring and black and white floor tiles in the toilets. The seats were revamped (again - **fig.23**), and Messrs Rusher and Brown collected pieces of movie paraphernalia overseas for display in the foyer.

In July 1999, however, the owners announced that plans were underway to convert the building into apartments, but by October 2001, new rehabilitation work on the cinema was back on the agenda, to retain the three cinemas but convert the upstairs Victoria into two 150-seat venues. The ground floor was to be remodelled as a dedicated theatre and function centre. Three luxury apartments were planned for the roof space and underground parking was proposed. This, however, entailed buying the neighbour's garden, and that proposition was hotly rejected. The cinema closed once again in November 2002.

[The Vic]

A third phoenix – the "Save Devonport Cinema Group" – was formed in January 2003. The owners met with the group and it was agreed that apartments were not desirable. The group wanted the building retained as an entertainment centre, and sought a protection order over the whole building (only the façade is currently scheduled in the District Plan). The cinema reopened for a short period under the group's management, with support from the Owner. An enterprising initiative was a letter to New Zealand's famous movie producer, Peter Jackson for his interest and support, but it appears that he was rather busy with the *Lord of the Rings*.

A sale to Kea property Group in September 2003 looked positive. David McAlpine, a director of Kea, is a local resident sympathetic to the objectives of the group. Film distributors were



Figure 23 refurbished seats



approached and three Auckland operators, but it appeared that, despite the upgrade of less than ten years earlier, new carpets, seats, air conditioning and projection equipment were again necessary. Once again the Vic closed. [*The Vic*]

The Victoria Cinema remains closed as a fully operational theatre, but under the enthusiastic efforts of Victoria Theatre Trust personnel, the building is a frequent venue for a variety of performances, demonstrating its continued potential as a cinema and performance venue. A significant amount of basic housekeeping has been carried out by volunteer effort and sponsorship has been found to clean and repaint the exterior. The Trust seeks to reestablish the theatre as a multi-purpose facility preserving its traditional cinema function (with a focus on "art house" cinema), and providing also for theatre and other live performance.

North Shore City Council is currently entering a mandatory public consultation phase to determine public support for Council purchase of the property.

A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF CINEMA IN NEW ZEALAND

The first public screening of a movie was in October 1896 at the Opera House in Wellesley Street. A short programme of motion pictures was offered in conjunction with a vaudeville performance. During the following decade movies grew in popularity. They were shown widely in local halls by travelling showmen and were often accompanied by live acts. (Hay)

In April 1908 the Haywards leased the Royal Albert Hall in Auckland and opened the first permanent cinema. In 1910 Fullers opened Kings Theatre just off Karangahape Road, the first theatre specifically built for movies. (Hay) The increased popularity of movies in the 1910s was due in part to technological improvements in projection and in part to the production of more sophisticated feature films and the development of Hollywood and the star system. It became a major form of public entertainment.

It took several years before the talkies were perfected but when they finally reached New Zealand the industry was rapidly transformed. The first demonstration of the "talkie" phenomenon took place at the King's Theatre in Stratford in early 1925, and by the late 1920s, cinema was on the crest of a wave, with many of the chains borrowing heavily to expand their businesses. By the end of the 1920s, it was claimed that one-sixth of the population of Auckland went to the movies each Saturday night. They were attracted by such stars as Greta Garbo, Gary Cooper, Buster Keaton, Gloria Swanson and Mickey Mouse.

With the talkies now widely available, cinema owners had little choice but to pay the huge cost of conversion to sound equipment. With the advent, however, of the Great Depression that followed soon after, cinema attendances were almost halved, and the cinema owners had increasing difficulty in repaying their mounting debts. (Hay) In late 1929, the Fuller Haywards Corporation raised over £100,000 in debentures to keep going, but after only a few more months of Depression, their entire complex of sixty three cinemas throughout the country, was taken over by the debenture holders.



Figure 24 Destruction of the Regent Theatre, Queen Street, Auckland, ca 1970



As noted above, Fullers resumed control from the debenture holders and formed Fuller Theatre Corporation, which was sold in 1945 to Kerridge. (Hay)

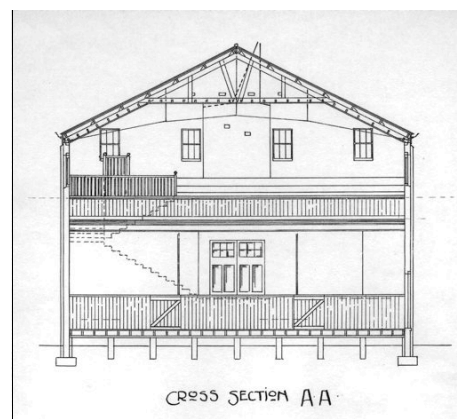
During the 1930s, the crowds flocked to the pictures to see such stars as Spencer Tracy, Maurice Chevalier, Bette Davies, Greta Garbo, Laurel and Hardy and Bing Crosby. The movies remained big business for fifty years, and by the mid 1980's the main distribution chains had a stranglehold on film distribution, bringing mainly blockbuster films for public consumption. A more sophisticated audience was, however, developing. In 1983, the Academy cinema opened in Auckland City and, with Northcote's Bridgeway in 1987, became an alternative 'art house' cinema and a first choice for many film buffs.

Through the 1980s, the distribution chains pushed up prices and closed theatres in provincial areas as they lost family audiences to television and, increasingly, video. In 1988, Pacer Kerridge closed 14 cinemas. Some important buildings were destroyed as a result of this process. (fig.24,25)



Figure 25 His Majesty's Arcade and Theatre, destroyed in the 1980s by Pacer Kerridge

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION



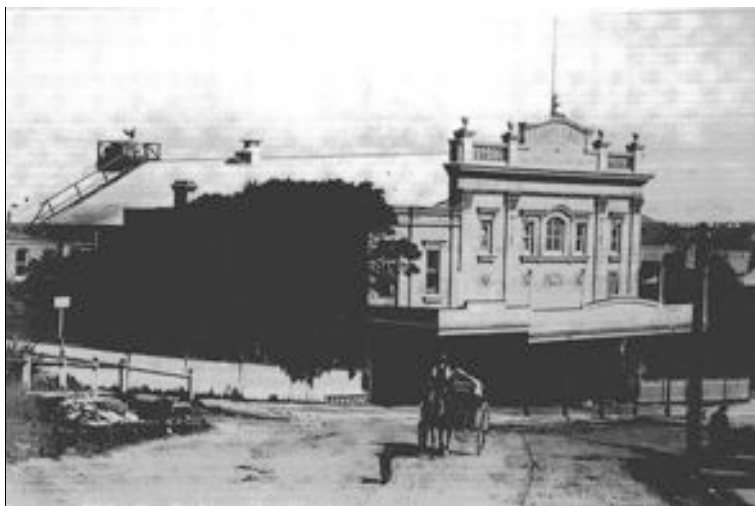


Figure 26 the constructed theatre in 1912

ORIGINS

The original Victoria Theatre building in Victoria Road was conceived at the end of an extended period of classical revivalism in architecture, expressed (certainly in the colonies) as a sort of “free” classicism, in which classical motifs were liberally adapted in new contexts and on buildings of unprecedented function and materials. This characterised much public and institutional building during the Edwardian period and into the interregnum before the first World War. Hence, the architecture of the principal façades made extensive use of classical mouldings and key elements such as architrave, cornice, bracket and baluster to create a varied and rich surface texture. [fig.26] It was, in other respects, a moderately prosaic building - essentially a brick barn with tin roof, and away from the street frontage, the architectural expression was confined to the interior. The street frontage itself was soberly rendered in grey stucco, relying on the play of light across the surface to emphasis its surface modelling and give it architectural expression.



Figure 28 Walker's original street elevation of 1912



Figure 27 street elevation showing the addition of two retail tenancies (nd)

The original drawing showed just the theatre, [fig.27] but an amended later drawing shows the addition of two shop premises on the north side, each with living accommodation behind and on the first floor. [fig.28]

As drawn by the architect, the street frontage of the 1912 building was modest in its architectural pretensions, but as ultimately constructed, it was altogether more prepossessing, with a more elaborated pediment and parapet balustrade - a distinct contrast with the plain gable proposed on the drawings.

Its bulk, and its location at the top of the business district in Victoria Road amongst generally residential buildings, ensured that it would be a local landmark building.[fig.29]



Figure 29 a dominant feature in the Devonport landscape, ATL:A4339 (nd)

The remodelling of the building in the 1929 expansion transformed it in scale and architecture. Daniel B. Patterson was strongly influenced by the work of W.H. Gummer who favoured an architecture of restrained or "stripped" neoclassical motifs. These alluded to classical precursors, but reconsidered them in form and modelling in much the same way as Baroque and Mannerist architecture adapted the classical language of architecture. [fig.30,31]



Figure 30 Walker's original street elevation (nd)

A comparison of the two designs shows how markedly architectural style had changed between the Edwardian era and the late 1920's. The overall composition of the street frontage, with the marked asymmetry of the entrance pavilion owes more perhaps to the Art Deco style than neoclassicism, which continued to pay homage to the Beaux Arts habit of symmetry - or at least, axially. Art Deco was itself, however, an essentially decorative movement. In New Zealand, buildings which are characterised as "Art Deco" were generally constructed using architectural forms which derived from the austere anti-decorative ideology of modernism.

Art Deco, therefore, satisfied an instinct in many architects and their clients for decoration in some form - and in this respect it is simply one of a range of decorative movements which were roughly contemporary. Stripped classical was an architect's response to designing the "decorative wall", by observing classical proportions and even forms, while reducing the rich modelling of classicism to raised or incised lines on the basic architectural forms.



Figure 31 Patterson's expanded elevation, 1929

The portion of the façade above the entrance incorporates stands forward of the wall behind, framed in a manner that does recall Art Deco, incorporating an arched window on the landing of the main staircase, and an oriel window aligned with a series of "attic" windows in the main façade. These are set in a scalloped frieze below a shallow stylised cornice. The wall panels are framed in a manner resembling columns or pilasters, and the whole combination is an accomplished adaptation of the architectural rhythms of the 1912 buildings. The order of the original façade of the 1912 building was thus preserved in the reworking of the heightened street wall.

The sense of height was enhanced by lowering the original first floor windows, which resulted in a large expanse of wall between these and the frieze. The overall increase in the height of the street frontage was not in fact great - less than 1.5 m to the main parapet, and only 2m at the centre of the entrance. (The gable roof of the auditorium was a further 3m higher, but this is not a factor at the street frontage).



Figure 32 The Victoria Road frontage showing the asymmetrical location of the entrance, 2005

The asymmetrical location of the new entrance at the north end of the street frontage gives the façade a distinction that it might otherwise have lacked and provides the point of architectural emphasis which identifies this as the point of entry to the building. [fig.32] the new entrance was located at the site of the two small shops originally on the site, and these were replaced at the lower end of the site with three new premises, stepped down the street.

The present colour scheme of the building does not do justice to its architecture, and caricatures the way in which colour was used in this decorative style. This is not assisted by the manner in which the colours have faded. When the construction of the expanded theatre was completed in 1929, the exterior was painted mono-chromatically in a sensible shade of white, and it has been inferred by some that this was a necessary economy in view of the depressed national economy. It is arguable, however, that this was always the intention for the building, and the interior was treated in much the same way. [fig.33] Architecturally, the Victoria Theatre can be described as an hybrid which precisely reflects its times.



Figure 33 original decorative mouldings of the 1929 interior which do not appear to have been painted

ARCHITECTS OF THE VICTORIA THEATRE

John M. Walker

John Walker came from an Ellerslie family and was educated in Auckland. He trained in the offices of Wilson and Moodie, and designed various brick and wooden shops and well finished residences in Remuera, Mount Eden and Herne Bay. He practised on his own account from an office in His Majesty's Arcade in Queen Street. The prominent Auckland architect M.K. Draffin was articulated to John Walker from 1906-10. Buildings attributed to Walker include:

- 1908 Anglican Parish Hall Ellerslie
 - c1913 Maori Agricultural College, Napier for the Church of the Latter Day Saints (destroyed in 1931 earthquake)
 - 1914 (with R.A. Abbott) Block of shops Newmarket (demolished)
 - British Imperial Oil Company Stores, Freemans Bay
 - Church of the Latter Day Saints, Queen Street.
- (Sheppard Collection School of Architecture Library)*

Daniel Boys Patterson - 1880 - 1962

Born in England, Daniel B. Patterson came to New Zealand in 1910 as a qualified architect. One of his first jobs was to prepare details for the Ferry Buildings. He succeeded Edward Bartley as the architect for the Auckland Diocesan Trust Board and the Auckland Savings Bank, for which he developed a corporate architectural image. At one time he was the architect for New Zealand Breweries, Ltd., and Campbell Ehrenfried Co. Ltd. He designed the Auckland Central Fire Station and several commercial buildings in the city. He was the senior partner in the expanded firm of Daniel B. Patterson, Lewis and Sutcliffe.

Buildings produced in his office include:

- 1912 Ellison Chambers Queen Street
- 1922 additions to Mappin House, Birchlands - later gifted given to the nation for an Auckland Government House
- ASB suburban branch Buildings, including Devonport
- Dalgetys, Albert Street
- Mater Hospital
- Warden's House, St John's College
- Nathan House, Manurewa
- D. Nathan's Fort Street Offices
- St. Stephen's College, Bombay
- various churches, including:
 - St. David's, Khyber Pass,
 - St. Columbus, Grey Lynn
 - St. James', Orakei,
 - St. Andrew's, Kohimarama.

Obit. NZ Herald 7.5.1962,

Historic Places Trust May 1995, pp.16-18

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE



GENERAL APPROACH

The cultural significance of a building or place comes from an appreciation of its physical character and from an understanding of its associations over time with persons and events. The nature and scope of this significance can be assessed on the basis of a number of characteristics - for example: the extent to which a building demonstrates design and/or construction techniques or knowledge of the time; or whether the building has aesthetic significance due either to its uniqueness, or its being representative of commonly held ideas of beauty, design and form; or whether the building or site has clear association with particular events or persons in history. Such analysis will account, not only for the overall significance of the place, but also for the contribution to that significance made by its constituent parts - whether a wing of the building, or a single room, or some item within the room, or some part of its setting.

The general approach used in this study for an assessment of the significance of the Victoria Theatre is adapted from the method proposed in J.S. Kerr's 1996 edition of *The Conservation Plan*. It relies on an examination of the building, its architectural character, its urban context, its interior features, an understanding of its place in the development of Devonport, and of the associations of the building and site over time with the community. It is the nature of history that buildings evolve over time, and a history of change and addition develops which explains its historic use. These changes, while altering original constructed features, nonetheless add further layers of meaning and significance, which form part of the understanding of the value of the building - ie. a measure of the cultural value of the building to the community at large.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Victoria Theatre has very great significance because of:

- Its association with the development of cinema in New Zealand and, in particular, as one of the oldest purpose-built cinema buildings now standing in the Southern Hemisphere;¹
- Its architectural character and design as a work of neo-classical architecture in New Zealand, reflecting also Art Deco influences, and the quality and consistency of its surviving architectural detail;
- Its importance as a work of the noted architect Daniel B. Patterson, and his predecessor, John M. Walker;
- Its landmark setting in modern Devonport, and, in particular, its contribution to the urban character of the commercial business district;
- Its value to the community as a public meeting place, and as a performance venue for film and (potentially) music and dramatic arts;

¹ Anecdotal evidence identifies the Municipal Theatre in Roxburgh (1898) as the oldest theatre building specifically appointed for the showing of moving pictures, but it is thought that the Victoria is the oldest built solely for this purpose. http://cinematreasures.org/news/11888_0_1_0_C/

IDENTIFICATION OF SIGNIFICANT FEATURES

Assessment Criteria

The preceding statement gives a general expression of the significance of the Victoria Theatre and its setting. It is, however, possible and useful to identify individual parts of the building which contribute to (or detract from) that significance, and to give some measure of the contribution of each part to the whole. The purpose in making such an evaluation is to assist the development of a sound understanding of the building and its parts and, in the light of this understanding, to set out a reasonable and sustainable policy for its conservation, as well as its continuing use and development.

The heritage value of each element may be defined in a systematic manner. Each element or feature of the building and its site may be said to have some value for this purpose and may be analysed according to its contribution to a proper understanding of the place. In this case, it is proposed to differentiate existing elements in the building according to the following broad categories:

- A. Whether these were part of the building on completion of the reconstruction of 1929 (and incorporating surviving 1912 fabric);
- B. Whether these were added by way of change to the building since the 1930s

While this may be considered a potentially crude measure of absolute significance, the intention in so differentiating parts of the building is to distinguish what may be regarded as authentic elements of the building in its most developed original (1929) form from those elements which may be regarded as part of the process of incremental change since that time. This does not mean that those later elements do not form part of the history of use of the building, but that these, to some extent, compromise its utility and its authentic architectural character.

Value is by definition a subjective view, but it is capable of being analysed under the following headings:

TECHNICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The extent to which the building and the site as a whole or particular elements demonstrate design and/or construction techniques or knowledge of the time, or incorporates items of special technical interest or significance.

FUNCTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Whether the particular function of a feature in the building helps to explain the use of the building or of the feature itself, or performs a particular environmental or social function.

ASSOCIATION with SIGNIFICANT EVENTS OR PERSONS

Whether a feature or element has clear association with particular events or persons in the history of the house, or the site, or the community.

AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

Whether a feature has aesthetic significance due to its contribution to the overall unity of the design of the building or whether an element of that feature makes a corresponding contribution to its aesthetic integrity, or has intrinsic aesthetic qualities which are valued by the community.

NET HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The degree to which a feature or element can be said to have an overall heritage value comprised of the above qualities.

The assessments are necessarily made without particular regard to the practical considerations which must be acknowledged when developing conservation policy - that is to say, the absolute worth or "value" of each element is considered rather than the practical consequences of its conservation. Consequently, the policy implication of a given assessment, as explained below, may not be invariably capable of practical application. The assessments remain, however, a key factor in determining policies for the treatment of principal spaces and individual features in the building.

Assessment Values

The following schedule assigns values to principal spaces, elements and individual features of the building and its setting, using a graduated scale of relative significance. Features which are not assessed in this plan as having heritage value, but which do not themselves diminish or obscure significant features, are not mentioned. Where, however, a feature is considered to be unsympathetic to heritage values in the building, the term '**intr**' - intrusive - is used. It is acknowledged that in some instances 'intrusive' elements may be necessary for the present use of the building as a place of public access, for fire protection and for code compliance. This does not bestow cultural significance on such items, but does suggest policy directions which should be pursued.

The term "original" is used to mean placed in the building at the time of its construction in 1912, or the major reconstruction of 1929. Where it is considered that items of particular value are presently obscured by another feature, the *potential* for realising that significance value is expressed as '**potential**'.

Primary spaces or parts of the building are assessed in **upper case** and the assessments of *components* of such spaces or elements are given in **lower case**. The tabulation schedule uses five categories which have consequential conservation policy implications summarised as follows - where non-intervention is not an option. (terms are those defined in the ICOMOS New Zealand Charter, refer **Appendices**):

A, a items of **exceptional** significance

Items or spaces which should be preserved and protected if at all possible. Only processes of **maintenance, stabilisation, repair, restoration, or reinstatement** are appropriate for such features.

- B, b** *items of **considerable** significance*
Items or spaces which should be preserved and protected where they do not conflict with the conservation of a feature of higher heritage value. These items should be subject to the processes of **maintenance, repair, restoration, reconstruction** and **reinstatement**. Category B spaces may be adapted to new uses where this process does not result in the loss of heritage value.
- C, c** *items of **some** significance*
Retention is preferred, but modification may be justified where there is no conflict with items of higher heritage value. Some reduction of significance or removal of such items may be justified where this assists the recovery of overall significance or where absolutely dictated by the needs of code compliance.
- D, d** *items of **no** significance or not relevant*
May be retained for functional reasons where there is no conflict with items of significance. Retention or removal of such items are options.
- intr** *items which are intrusive on conservation values*
The should be replaced or concealed wherever practicable, where this will assist the recovery of heritage significance.

TABULATION OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Site / Setting

The building maintains its historic relationship with the street and continues to serve as a key urban landmark in the Devonport central business area. Assessment of items outside the immediate site of the building is intended to direct the development of appropriate urban design policies by the territorial local authority.

views of the building within Devonport [fig.34,35]

a



Figure 34 View of the Theatre building from upper Clarence Street, 2005



Figure 35 View from Victoria Road, 2006

BUILDING - EXTERIOR FEATURES

Roof (1929)

The roof is a crucial formal element of the overall composition of a building and usually gives it much of its primary architectural character. In this case, the design of the roof was not treated as a major architectural feature and it was not intended to be generally visible from the street. It does, however form part of any view of the building, and is a clear expression of the shape and scale of the building behind the street façade. The original form of the roof is intact and the present roof covering is appropriate in texture, material and colour. Features which have a bearing on cultural significance include:

- gable roof form a
- pitched roof cladding of corrugated steel sheet [fig.36] b

Wall elevations

A

The external walls are the most visible architectural elements of the theatre, and the street elevation establishes its architectural character. All outward-facing exterior elevations contribute to overall significance, but the street elevation is of the highest cultural significance, for its intact architectural character and for establishing the prominence of the building in the near and distant landscape.

Specific features which have a bearing on cultural significance include:

- rendered brick masonry walls, with moulded architectural features, including architraves, cartouches, cornice and parapet a
- brick masonry flanking walls a
- plywood door in southern window opening intr
- steel framed window joinery, including oriel window [fig.37] a
- verandah c
- balustrade and steps on verandah intr
- illuminated display panel over verandah intr
- air conditioning unit on verandah intr
- leaded top-lights in original shop frontages [fig.38] a
- modern bi-folding doors in shop frontages intr



Figure 36 view of the Victoria Theatre, approaching from the north

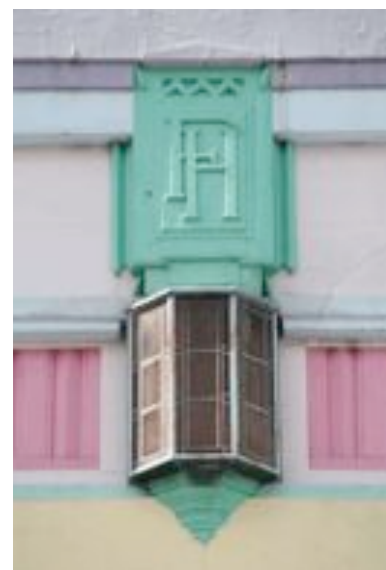


Figure 37 Oriel window centrepiece over main entrance



Figure 38 Shop fronts in Victoria Road

INTERIOR FEATURES

In the inventory of spaces and elements of cultural significance within the building, many features are common throughout and an assessment need not be reiterated in every case. In the following assessments, rooms and spaces are as shown on the attached plans, using descriptive names currently in use. Not every space or cupboard is specifically assessed for heritage significance. This is not to say that these spaces should not be preserved, but indicates that they do not have specific architectural significance or that they contain no features of identified heritage value beyond their basic construction elements (wall, floor, ceiling). Where, however, minor elements are associated with spaces ranked **A** or **B**, these may have collateral importance, either as reinforcing that primary significance, or as having a buffering or sacrificial role in relation to major spaces.

Foyer [fig.39-41]

ramped floor
moulded plaster ceiling form and detail
solid plaster walls and columns (marbled)
entrance doors
ticket booth
stair to circle including balustrade and marbled treads [fig.39]
entrance to Bar in south wall [fig.40]
overhead lighting track
refreshment bar and associated joinery
mirrored north and east wall of stair

A
d
a
a
a
b
a
d
d
intr
intr

"DC3" Bar

solid plaster walls
leaded glass top-lights
bi-folding timber doors
window in south wall
bar furniture and joinery

B
b
b
a
intr
d
intr



Figure 39 The entrance foyer looking towards the stair



Figure 40 view into the entrance foyer from the adjacent bar



Figure 41 view from the stair landing towards the bar



Figure 42 View of the Albert (the stalls in the original theatre), showing new bio-box at right - note boxed structural support on ceiling for Victoria Theatre on the original first floor circle

Auditorium - "The Albert"

ramped floor (re-pitched 1990s)
moulded plaster work of original interior, including circle balustrade, ceiling, proscenium and grilles [fig.42,43]
solid plaster walls and original moulded features
modern moulded plaster screens
later (1990s) moulded plaster work

A
d
a
a
a
d
d



Figure 43 view of the proscenium arch through the 1990s timber screen

seats
present cinema screen
bio box (1990s)
timber screen above circle balustrade
crying room

b
d
d
intr
d

Stage Area [fig.44]

floor - slightly pitched
steps to main floor level
egress doors
steps and balustrade to circle gallery [fig.45]

A
a
c
b
b



Figure 44 confined area
behind the
projection screen



Figure 45 steps and door to
former circle
door to former circle



Figure 46 the basement - undergoing a makeover for use as
changing room
intr

Basement (sub stage) [fig.46]

steps from main level
old boiler room and plant

B
b
b

Circle Foyer (first floor)

(this is a remnant of the original Circle Lounge) [fig.13]
stair & balustrade - from ground floor to circle entry [fig.47]
partition to George cinema

A
a
intr

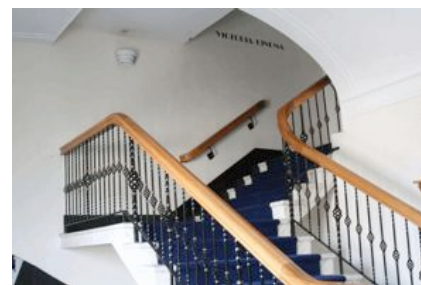


Figure 47 upper part of stair to circle entry

The George (including bio box) [fig.48-50]

(the George occupies most of the former Circle Lounge which is
potentially capable of reinstatement as originally constructed)
pitched floor
seating
paint colours (on walls and ceiling etc)

(potential) A
intr
b
intr

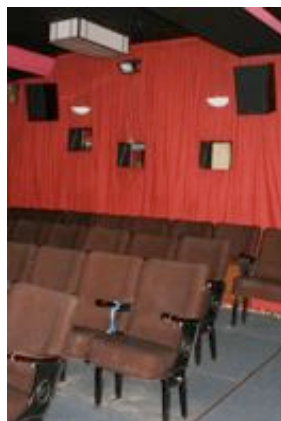


Figure 48 looking towards the
bio box



Figure 49 The George looking
towards the screen



Figure 50 The George bio box



Figure 51 Original Circle
toilets

Circle Toilets (disused) [fig.51]	B
sanitary fittings (as fitted in 1929)	b
joinery - including doors and windows	b

Auditorium - "The Victoria" [fig.52]	(potential) A
tiered floor and steps	a
moulded plaster work of original interior, including ceiling, and ventilation grilles	a
solid plaster walls and original moulded features	a
later (1990s) moulded plaster work including proscenium	intr
seats (mixed provenance)	b
present cinema screen	d
original bio box	b
balustrade to upper circle	a
enclosure to entry door	a
fire egress to south door	b



Figure 52 The Victoria auditorium - entry from circle stair at right

FACTORS AFFECTING THE CONSERVATION OF THE VICTORIA THEATRE



The conservation of the Victoria Theatre is constrained and limited by numerous factors which must be taken into account in the development of a coherent and achievable conservation policy.

Any development of the theatre for continued use is constrained by the necessity for conservation of elements of the building which are identified as having cultural significance. Identified constraints on development include the following.

THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACE

Historical

The Victoria Theatre is the oldest surviving purpose-built cinema building in New Zealand. Apart from intermittent periods of inactivity, it has been in continuous use as a cinema and entertainment venue since the construction of the original building in 1912. Its local significance as an heritage building is reflected in its status in the North Shore City District Plan under category A.

Social

The Victoria Theatre has played an important part in the social fabric of the Devonport community, as a place of public entertainment - especially in the pre-television era - and as an occasional venue for public meetings.

Architectural

The form of the building is a result of the enlargement of an earlier Edwardian Baroque building to provide increased seating capacity. The architectural treatment of the street façade reflects the prevailing taste in architecture of the late 1920s, and certainly the characteristic style of new cinema buildings of that time, in which forms of "stripped" classical architecture became overlaid with elements of Art Deco design. It will not be appropriate to make major alteration to the street façade in such a way as to change its architectural character.

Setting

The theatre occupies a prominent position at the north end of the Devonport central business district, where it marks the entry to the centre and also forms a strong visual termination of the commercial street.

Technical

The theatre, as reconstructed in 1929, remains an example of theatre design from the hey day of the cinema in New Zealand. Any change to the building which recovers its 1924 configuration and appearance will contribute to the overall significance of the building.



Figure 54 Original seats in the Albert Theatre

STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

Resource Management Act

The Council's role under the **Section 5** of the Resource Management Act 1991 is to promote the sustainable management of natural and physical resources. In achieving this purpose, under Section 6(f), the Council is required to recognise and provide for, as a matter of national importance, the recognition and protection of heritage values of sites, buildings, places or areas.

In section 187(c) of the *Resource Management Act 1991*, the New Zealand Historic Places Trust is defined as a 'Heritage Protection Authority' and may, under that Act, give notice of a requirement to the territorial local authority to protect any building classified under Section 22.1(a)(i) of the *Historic Places Act*. In this event, the requirement must be heard by Council under the provisions of the *Resource Management Act*.

Local Authority Registration

The Victoria Theatre is scheduled in the North Shore City Operative District Plan under Category A (item **302**). The Plan identifies Category A Scheduled Items as having: "outstanding aesthetic beauty, or architectural, scientific or historical significance well beyond their immediate environment. It is of prime importance that items in Category A are protected" (Sec. 11.4.1.6).

Under **Section 11.4.1.2** of the District Plan, a Discretionary Activity resource consent is required where an application involves significant work or alteration to Scheduled Cultural Heritage Items and the application must be accompanied by a conservation plan or detailed heritage assessment. Exceptions to this provision will be considered if the proposed work involves: "repainting, repair and/or insignificant alteration of any existing fabric, or detailing carried out in a manner and design and with similar materials and appearance to those originally used.." Any assessments should address the criteria outlined in **Sec 11.4.1.3** of the District Plan.

Under **Section 4.4.5.1** of the North Shore City District Plan, a Limited Discretionary Activity resource consent is required where an application involves excavation, damage or alteration to any site of geological significance. A consideration for exceptions to this provision will be made if a detailed assessment is prepared. Any assessments should address the criteria outlined in **Sec 4.4.5.2** of the District Plan.

Historic Places Act 1993

The Victoria Cinema is not classified under the Historic Places Act 1993.



Figure 55 a corner of the auditorium (now part of the Albert)

Building Code Requirements

Section 38 of the *Building Act 2004* requires that alterations to an existing building or structure will include provisions for means of escape in the event of fire, and access and facilities for the disabled. In applying these provisions, the Act specifically requires controlling local authorities under **Section 47(j)** to take account of other considerations, including special historical or cultural value.

Section 45 requires building owners to provide annual building warrants of fitness for buildings with a compliance schedule. The building owner is required to state that the requirements of the compliance schedule have been fully complied with during the previous 12 months.

Section 46 prevents the use of a building being changed unless various safety, sanitary and disabled persons' features comply, as nearly as practicable, with current building code requirements for a new building (and other features comply to same extent as they had previously).

Section 66 allows territorial authorities to give notices requiring work to be done to earthquake prone buildings (as defined in s66). Professional advice will be required to confirm the extent to which the building meets (or fails to meet) the requirements of the Act in respect to seismic capacity.

Section 80(1)(b) creates an offence of using a building, or permitting a building to be used, for a purpose for which the building is not safe or has inadequate means of escape from fire.

Access for people with disabilities

The Building Code also covers access to and within places of public assembly for people with disabilities. Under the Act, there must be suitable access from the street to the building and also within the building. This may be interpreted as requiring facilities for vertical transportation of mobility-impaired persons.

THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE OWNER AND OCCUPIER

The Victoria Theatre is currently in private ownership, but is for sale. The North Shore City Council is a potential purchaser, but this is subject to public consultation under the Local Government Act. Until the results of this process have been confirmed, the specific requirements of an Owner cannot yet be established, but in the event that the Victoria Theatre Trust becomes the manager of the building, some changes will be necessary to allow the building to be adapted for live performance.

THE CONDITION OF THE PLACE

The building is well made and, despite a number of identifiable defects, appears to be fundamentally sound, but there is a significant level of deferred maintenance requiring attention. A condition assessment requires to be carried out to determine the extent of necessary repairs.



Figure 56

The findings of such a report should guide the development of a full programme of remedial works in the building. As a building not in constant use or occupation, it remains susceptible to water damage and to periodic vandalism and graffiti attack. The process of returning the building to full use as a cinema will require overhaul and modernisation of public facilities, and the introduction of amenities for performers, as well as improved provision for access to the stage.

PROCEDURAL FACTORS

Conservation Standards

This study has been prepared to comply with the principles outlined in the *ICOMOS New Zealand Charter* and is intended to provide independent and considered guidance on all future work on the theatre building. These principles underpin the conservation policies recommended in this document. Because of the high cultural significance of the building, all conservation works carried out on the property should be consistent with accepted international conservation practice, particularly as expressed in the *ICOMOS New Zealand Charter*.

Special Skills

The conservation of historic buildings and structures requires special skills and training. All conservation work on historic elements of the building should be carried out under the direction of an architect with recognised training, specialist skills and proven experience in the conservation of historic places.

Maintenance

Ongoing maintenance of the building is essential to ensure the continuing stability of all features of historic significance and the continued well-being of the theatre. Maintenance practices for the building will best be guided by a systematic maintenance plan. Such documents require periodic (e.g. quinquennial) review to ensure that the maintenance practices used are appropriate.

Conservation plan

This conservation plan is a policy document for a building of significant regional and national cultural heritage value. Public scrutiny of the conservation process should be encouraged by lodging copies in an appropriate public venue. Copies of this document should be submitted with applications for resource consent or other statutory procedures. It will be important for archival purposes to record conservation processes as these are carried out. This will allow the effectiveness of conservation processes used in the building to be monitored, and will enable account to be taken of new physical evidence uncovered in the building, which may add to an understanding of its overall significance. It may consequently be necessary to revise relevant sections of this document and possibly to amend aspects of the conservation policy. Similarly, it is desirable to review conservation policy from time to time, for example through a quinquennial review process.



CONSERVATION POLICY



CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this Conservation Plan is to establish realistic and achievable policies for the conservation of the *Victoria Theatre* in such a way as to allow its continuing use and maintenance as a functioning picture theatre, performance venue and place of local and national cultural heritage significance.

These policies, as set out in this section, derive from an understanding of the building's provenance, its present condition and the assessment of its cultural significance. The policies in this section should, therefore, guide the conservation of the theatre, all further development on the site and all on-going maintenance and repair of the building. These policies have the following principal objectives:

- the preservation and enhancement of the intrinsic character of the building and its component parts
- the recovery of the essential character and appearance of the building in order to retain its original developed form, and to address present and long term physical deterioration;
- the discreet incorporation of absolutely necessary new works or elements which will enable the theatre to continue as an effective cinema and performance venue, in such a way as to cause no, (or minimal), loss of cultural significance;
- the establishment and implementation of a conservation process which will lead to the repair and restoration of damaged or missing building elements;
- to ensure that all design and maintenance decisions for the building are based on sound conservation practices and on consistent professional advice;
- to support the continuing use of the building so that it is, as far as possible, economically self-sustaining.

GENERAL APPROACH

In order to ensure that cultural heritage values are properly and successfully preserved over time, it is essential that internationally and nationally recognised techniques and methodologies for conservation should be systematically adopted and implemented. The recommendations of this study are based on such methods and techniques and these are recognised by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust and North Shore City Council. The following general objectives and associated policies are advanced to guide the conservation process:

- Policy 0.1** All adopted conservation policies should be based implicitly on the *ICOMOS New Zealand Charter* for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value.

Policy 0.2 The "Statement of Cultural Significance" and the associated detailed assessments should be acknowledged as a basis for overall and detailed planning for both conservation of existing fabric and planning of new work.

Policy 0.3 These conservation policies are of value only if they are formally adopted by those responsible for the ongoing care and maintenance of the building and only if a process is adopted to ensure their implementation and periodic review. They should be acknowledged by the North Shore City Council as a standard against which conservation activities in the building are assessed.

In the discussion which follows, the term "original" is used to refer to any fabric which was placed in the building from the time of its construction in 1912 up until (and including) its redevelopment and expansion in 1929. Only primary wall construction up to the original roof level survives from 1912, and the greater part of the all other fabric of the building dates from 1929. All work up to and including is, therefore, regarded as having high heritage significance.

USE OF THE VICTORIA THEATRE

Objective 1

To ensure that the use of the Victoria Theatre is consistent with its intended function and that this use is neither destructive of conservation values nor places significant features of the building at risk.

Explanation

The *Victoria Theatre* was designed as a venue for cinema in suburban Devonport. The building continues in modified form to perform this function on an occasional basis, but is in a state of functional hiatus because of present uncertainty as to its ownership and future use.

The building has been in continuous use as a cinema and entertainment venue since 1912. The purpose of conserving the theatre is to preserve it in good physical condition and to return it as a functioning theatre, as nearly as possible in its original developed form following the redevelopment of 1929, so that it serves a useful purpose while remaining a part of New Zealand's history. This can be achieved by ensuring its continued use and recognition of its heritage value, and by maintaining the property in good condition according to sound conservation practice and prudent property management principles.

Because of the historic significance of the building, it merits preservation in a manner which as far as possible retains its original features and recovers its original configuration. It is, however, recognised that continuing use of the building may conflict in part with the needs of conservation.

The building has been altered for various functional and commercial reasons, and will continue to require minor alteration over time to accommodate its continued use as a public entertainment facility in public ownership. Acceptable activities in the building will be those which do not compromise its value as an historic moving picture theatre.

As with all performance venues which are required to cater to multiple uses, it is more suited to some activities than others. Because it was conceived and built as a cinema, its seating layout and sight-lines are better suited to that use than to live theatre or musical ensemble concerts.

To support the continued use of the theatre for public entertainment, it will be necessary to upgrade some services and incorporate new facilities such as access for the disabled, changing rooms and associated facilities, modern communications and lighting systems, and, particularly, public reception areas. Planning of such facilities must be made part of an overall consideration of the conservation of the building and should not be dealt with on an *ad hoc* basis. All decisions on the future use of the building should have regard to the following conservation policies:

- Policy 1.1** The conservation policies proposed in this document should be adopted, irrespective of any intended use for the building or its various parts.
- Policy 1.2** *The Victoria Theatre* should continue to be used as a venue for public entertainment. There must be sufficient flexibility in planning to ensure this continued use as well as the necessary support services and means of access whilst recovering original character and maintaining cultural significance.
- Policy 1.3** No use for the building should be considered which will intrude on its principal heritage spaces or which will lead to the loss of heritage values through whole or partial subdivision.
- Policy 1.4** All planning decisions should be made in the context of an integrated development plan for the building and should be subject to a formal periodic review process.

CONSERVATION OF HISTORIC FABRIC

Objective 2

To conserve intrinsically valuable original features of the complex with minimum intervention, and then only as required for its physical conservation or protection.

Explanation

Original parts of the building are intrinsically valuable, and conservation of these should aim to intervene as little as possible. Where it is necessary to carry out maintenance or repair of culturally significant historic fabric or to remove or replace any part of the building for this purpose, or to adapt the building for new uses, the following policies should apply:

- Policy 2.1** Except as anticipated in policies 3.2 and 3.5, all fabric which is original to the building or which is identified in this report as having cultural significance value **a** or **b**, should remain in the building and should be conserved. For such items, processes of **maintenance, stabilisation, restoration, repair** or **reinstatement** should be employed in their conservation.
- Policy 2.2** Original or significant fabric should only be removed when there is no practicable appropriate alternative, and only that which is absolutely necessary to facilitate compliance with Building Code requirements should be removed.
- Policy 2.3** Such fabric should, wherever possible, be carefully reinstated on completion of other conservation works to recover as closely as possible the original appearance of the affected element or space in the building.
- Policy 2.4** Significant materials which are removed but which cannot practicably be reinstated in the building should be recorded. Where such fabric is capable of reuse in the building, it should be catalogued and safely stored until reinstated, or until relocated in an appropriate alternative location in the building.
- Policy 2.5** Significant original parts of the building should only be replaced with new material where:
- the original material is structurally unsound, or no longer performs its intended function, or is a hazard;
 - the material is so badly decayed or damaged that its appearance will be aesthetically unacceptable;
 - the behaviour of the material or element has a deleterious effect on other materials or elements, or on the building as a whole;
 - building elements no longer fulfill their intended purpose or fall seriously short of modern standards of safety.

MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF THE PROPERTY

Objective 3

To retain original features and elements of the building and to maintain these over time in a manner which ensures their maximum protection and long term survival.

In addition to conservation actions carried out in terms of the policies outlined above, and any alterations to the building, a programme of planned ongoing maintenance is essential to ensure the stability of all features of historic significance and the continued well-being of the building. Measures to eliminate physical shortcomings should be consistent with sound conservation practice and the principles of the ICOMOS New Zealand Charter. As noted earlier, a full assessment of the present condition of the building is an essential requirement to enable necessary maintenance and repair to be identified. Also necessary is an engineering assessment of the structural capacity of the building, to identify upgrading works required to meet current seismic standards. The following policies are recommended for conservation maintenance of the building:

- Policy 3.1** All causes of physical deterioration of building fabric should be identified and arrested, and measures taken to prevent their recurrence.
- Policy 3.2** All defects in the physical fabric of the building fabric as identified in the Artefact study should be remedied using conservation techniques.
- Policy 3.3** All processes used to eliminate and repair such building failures should be consistent with sound conservation practice and with the principles of the ICOMOS New Zealand Charter.
- Policy 3.4** A planned programme of systematic maintenance for the *Victoria Theatre* building should be commissioned and adopted following its restoration and any changes resulting from code compliance or adaptation. This plan should make provision for the management of repairs and temporary support or enclosure in the event of a natural disaster or other external threat to the fabric of the building. Following its implementation, such a plan should be regularly monitored and reviewed at intervals of no greater than five years.

EXTERIOR CONSERVATION POLICIES

The substantial alterations to the *Victoria Theatre* building carried out in the 1990s were limited mainly to its interior, and the main exterior manifestation of this was the pastel colours of the "Art Deco" paint scheme. Probably the most significant change to the exterior was the sealing of two windows in the George theatre on the first floor. While the auditorium was 'modernised' for this purpose, the greater part of the original decorative plaster work remains in the building - together with new material replicating original features.

Conservation maintenance and repair of the exterior should be undertaken as part of any adaptation of the building. This will be limited mainly to the repair and maintenance of exterior joinery and the renewal of paint finishes. The following conservation policies should be adopted for this work:

- Policy 4.1** The external form and appearance of the *Victoria Theatre* should be retained as it was altered 1929.
- Policy 4.2** Minor additions to the building - away from the street frontage - may be contemplated, to fulfill practical operational requirements where space is available on the site.
- Policy 4.3** Original features which have been altered or lost since construction should be reinstated or reconstructed where these assist an understanding of the architectural character of the building.
- Policy 4.4** The original external colour scheme and finish should be determined from on-site analysis and restored if possible or, where appropriate, modern high performance paint systems should be used to match original finishes. Where evidence of natural rendered finish is established, the external wall surface should be matched as closely as possible in colour and texture to the original.
- Policy 4.5** *Permanent* advertising of theatre productions, film screenings and events should not be permitted to obscure the principal street façades. Where billboards are attached directly to any external wall or parapet, these should not alter the profile of the building when viewed from any public vantage point.
- Policy 4.6** Exterior lighting should be based on evidence of original fittings where this survives, and should be designed to replicate that originally installed on the building, but should avoid damage to surviving significant building fabric. Where new lighting is proposed, this should be carefully designed and located to highlight architectural features of the building according to a considered plan, to give emphasis to its mass and form, and should be wholly concealed behind exterior features.

INTERIOR CONSERVATION POLICIES

The interior of *The Victoria Theatre* strongly reflects the character of its exterior, and the Neo-Classical motifs of the exterior continue through to the auditorium. The interior decor was retained in the 1990s refurbishment, even though the auditorium was divided into two volumes. In addition, the pitch of the ground floor was altered. The timber screen introduced in the Albert cinema to conceal the wall and floor separating the two spaces is singularly inappropriate and intrusive.

The architectural quality of the public stair foyer and entrance lobby are less significant because they have been substantially

altered but the key elements of the space are discernible. The changes introduced to provide food services do not assist the space to perform its intended function, but the existing toilet facilities have high amenity levels.

At first floor level, the original circle lounge has been replaced by the smaller George cinema. This seriously limits the utility of available public areas, and has diminished the architectural character of this part of the building.

Further changes to these public spaces and amenities should aim to reconstruct the original spaces, provide improved public crush area in the ground floor foyer and reinstate the original configuration of the public foyer on the first floor. In conjunction with the reconstruction of these spaces, it will be necessary to adapt the building to provide for equitable access for all persons - this may require the installation of a lift.

The original projection suite in the circle is intimately bound up with the history of the theatre and, because of this, warrants preservation. The more recent projection box on the ground floor has no particular significance, but could be retained if required for functional reasons.

Policies for conservation of the interiors of the theatre will have, as a primary objective, the preservation and/or restoration of the stairs, entrance foyer and gallery, and the reinstatement of the auditorium as a single space, and generally as follows:

- Policy 5.1** The essential architectural character of the auditorium should be restored to its original configuration, and any new alteration or upgrading for performance or structural or human safety, should not be intrusive.
- Policy 5.2** The public entrance foyer should be re-designed to recover as far as possible the original layout, but preserving the relationship to the existing bar/shop.
- Policy 5.3** The first floor lounge foyer should be wholly restored using evidence of surviving fabric and original photographs.
- Policy 5.4** Spaces of lesser architectural significance in the building should, wherever practicable, be retained in original form and should be refurbished to recover original finishes and elements where appropriate. These spaces may, however, be modified to enable new structural elements to be inserted, or where necessary to provide for human safety.
- Policy 5.5** Original decorative features lost or displaced over time should, wherever the opportunities arise, be reinstated, reconstructed, relocated or retrieved.
- Policy 5.6** Site investigation should be undertaken to establish or confirm original colour schemes, pigments used and the manner in which these were applied. Where there has been later re-coating or alterations, colours should be restored in the manner originally executed.

ADAPTATION AND ALTERATION

The Victoria Theatre was designed and built as a cinema and as a place of public assembly. It is the nature of performing arts and cinema venues, that change in entertainment fashion generally results in change to the buildings which house them. Other changes result from new standards for public safety, from new building code standards, new performance space requirements and changing technical facilities. Such demands and new requirements will place severe demands on the auditorium, and other public spaces in the building, but where the need for this is demonstrated, necessary physical change should, as far as practicable, be accommodated in less significant ancillary spaces. The following policies should guide any upgrading of the theatre to perform its primary functions:

- Policy 6.1** Adaptation of the main auditorium for a new use should be permitted only where this will not result in the loss of original finishes or the present character of the interior.
- Policy 6.2** The implementation of new works to provide access for disabled persons, improved fire egress provisions and structural upgrading should not, as far as possible, be apparent within the space of the auditorium or the stair foyer.
- Policy 6.3** Lighting of significant interior spaces should be based on surviving original fittings and new supplementary lighting should, as far as possible, be wholly concealed behind interior features.
- Policy 6.4** Provision should be made within the stair foyer and entrance lobby to display billboards and other display advertising material in a manner which is sympathetic to the architectural character of the space and which does not require permanent alteration to original finishes. Temporary fabric panels will be appropriate for the promotion of particular functions, provided these are not fixed through any decorative features. Unobtrusive permanent fixing points may be contemplated for this purpose.
- Policy 6.5** Original signs in the building should be preserved where these survive, as part of the original decorative character. New signs should conform to an established regime or design manual which should be professionally prepared and incorporated in the maintenance manual, and which takes due account of code requirements.
- Policy 6.6** Original architectural hardware and door and window furniture should be preserved where these survive and, where necessary, should be refurbished. Missing items in principal spaces which cannot be located should be replaced with new reproduction items patterned on surviving hardware.

CONSERVATION EXPERTISE AND PRACTICE

Because of the nature of the Victoria Theatre, and its cultural heritage importance, normal practices for the procurement of professional advice, day-to-day management of property maintenance and selection of trade skills may not be appropriate. The conservation of historic buildings requires special skills and training in the analysis and evaluation of heritage fabric. It also demands the sensitive and knowledgeable application of modern technologies in conjunction with an understanding of traditional forms of building construction. This work has become the domain of the specialist professional. Similarly, contract methods, site practices and construction techniques for conservation works require higher than usual standards of skill and care, which will not be typical of the construction industry as a whole. The following policies are proposed to encourage a coordinated approach to management of the theatre as commercial property and as a building of cultural significance:

Policy 7.1 All work concerned with the conservation of historic elements in the building and all detailing of new elements incorporated in significant spaces should be carried out with the assistance of an architect with recognised training, specialist skills and proven experience in conservation design and technology.

Policy 7.2 There should be continuity and consistency of relevant conservation advice for all work on the theatre building. This should be available equally for works instigated by the tenant and within those bodies with regulatory responsibilities.

Policy 7.3 The selection of contractors for work on the theatre building should be limited to firms or trades-persons with proven expertise in their respective fields. This should extend to contract management and administration.

Policy 7.4 Contracts for conservation works should be let separately from those concerned with associated new development, even where this development may be part of an integrated larger whole. Alternatively, conservation works may be established on a project team basis within a larger overall site programme but with clear separation of work methods and site management practices and relationships to professional advisers.

Policy 7.5 Where there is potential conflict between the application of conservation policy and the pursuit of objectives in adapting the building, a method of arbitration, such as a value management forum, should be agreed in advance of resolving such conflict in a mutually acceptable manner through the examination and assessment of alternative strategies for each objective. This may be dealt with by conditions imposed as part of a resource consent.

STATUTORY PROCEDURES AND PUBLIC SCRUTINY

Objective 4

To provide a high standard of public information and interpretation to accompany all works and to explain the history of the complex over time.

Explanation

The Victoria Theatre is currently in private ownership, but is for sale. It is possible (but not certain) that the building may be purchased by the North Shore City Council, in which case it is probable that the building would be managed under a form of trust. The process of gaining statutory consents should acknowledge heritage values in the building and should take account of public interest in the building as a place of cultural significance.

The North Shore City Council has responsibility under the *Resource Management Act* to manage the historic resources of the district. When exerting its power under the *Building Act*, the Council is also required to act with due regard (in the case of an existing building) to "any special historical or cultural value of that building." [Sec.47(j)] This section allows the Council to exercise its discretion over historic buildings in matters of detailed code compliance. The desire of any owner (including a territorial authority) to realise the best economic use of a valuable site must be tempered by an understanding that the building itself, while requiring maintenance and some alteration to improve its functioning capacity, is both a commercial asset and a place of very great cultural heritage significance.

The theatre is identified in the *North Shore City District Plan* as a place of cultural heritage significance, but is not presently registered as an historic place under the *Historic Places Act 1993*. However, the analysis carried out for this study shows that the theatre has clear heritage significance for the reasons set out in the Statement of Significance.

Because the theatre is a building of cultural significance held in high public esteem, and because of the probability of high public interest in any development of the building, it will be important that any works associated with its conservation and development should be publicised with well-designed and clear displays and high quality information.

It is suggested that this will help engender public support for any project which aims to secure the future of the building for on-going use. Where practicable, it may be beneficial to allow public inspection of works in progress - consistent with the safety of the building, the public and the reasonable requirements of contractors.

In order to maintain public support and to provide a satisfactory flow of public information, the following policies are recommended:

Policy 8.1

Copies of this conservation plan should be publicly available for consultation in North Shore Public Libraries and at the theatre itself.

Policy 8.2

Copies of development and conservation proposals should be lodged with groups with an identified specific interest in the effects of the planning process on the building.

Policy 8.3

Well-designed information material should be prepared for public release, incorporating high quality graphical material, photographs and brief text. Media interest should be regularly encouraged.

Policy 8.4

A permanent display of selected archival material, drawings and photographs should be available at the site and in selected public locations to further explain the significance and provenance of the Victoria Theatre.

Policy 8.5

Consideration should be given to publication of an edited version of this document for public sale.

Policy 8.5

Consideration should be given to seeking recognition of the building's heritage significance under the Historic Places Act.



APPENDICES



REFERENCE MATERIAL CONSULTED

Newspapers

The Devonport Flagstaff
21.10.1993

Auckland Star
01.03.1934 'Trust proposes refurbishing to save theatre'
08.06.1988 'Victoria's facelift put into picture'
31.01.1990

North Shore Times Advertiser
09.05.1962, 'Benwell's Return after 40 Years'
15.05.1966 'The Vic – holding a place in film-goers' hearts'
04.02.1988 'Victoria theatre closes'
05.09.1989 'Albert joins Victoria in cinema revival'
13.05.1993 'Trust to work for cinema'
29.10.1993 'New cinema owner seeks seat solution'

New Zealand Herald
28.10.1912 'Devonport Picture Theatre'
26.10.1912 Advertisement
26.10.1912 Picture Entertainments

Magazines

All Aboard
17. 04. 1997 'Movie going just like the good old days'

NZ Commercial Design Trends
Vol.2 No.3 1990 'Victoria & Albert- remake in Technicolor'

Published Works

Hayward, Bruce W. And Selwyn P. *Cinemas of Auckland 1896-1979*

Grefstad, Jan, 1999?, *The Picture Theatres of Auckland*,

Titchener, Paul, 1977, *Beginnings, A History of the North Shore of Auckland Volume 1*,

Valverde, Christine, 2005, *"The Vic" Past, Present and Future*,

North Shore City Council, (date), *Heritage Inventory*,

Other

Artefact Limited, *Victoria Theatre Devonport Heritage Feasibility Assessment*, North Shore City Council, February 2005

Jaquie Sharpe, "Saving the Devonport Theatre A Vertical file resource"

Devonport Library - Newspaper clippings concerning the campaigns to save the theatre – some not identified



Figure 59 detail of moulded plaster ceiling ventilator

ARCHITECTURAL DRAWINGS

The following drawings have been prepared to explain the present arrangement of the theatre building:

Plan level 1
Plan level 2
Plan level 3
Victoria Road elevation
Long section through the building