



New Zealand
Historic Places Trust *Pouhere Taonga*

Methven Public Library

60 Main Street, METHVEN



Methven Public Library. www.flickr.com. Photographed by Francis Vallance 4/04/2009. Copyright Francis Vallance

Registration Type

Historic Place Category 2

Register Number

7156

Date Registered

24-Feb-1994

Legal Description

Pt RS 28681 (CT CB312/275), Canterbury Land District

Extent of Registration

Extent includes the land described as Pt RS 28681 (CT CB312/275), Canterbury Land District and the building known as Methven Public Library thereon, and its fittings and fixtures.

City/District Council

Ashburton District

Region

Canterbury Region

Summary

Methven Public Library (1883-84) on the main street of the small mid Canterbury town of Methven has been described as the 'most substantial building' in the township. Methven was formed in the late 1870s and came to prominence in 1880 as the terminus of the newly opened branch railway from Rakaia. A library had been mooted in the early development of the

town and planning commenced around 1880 when residents formed a committee to raise funds for a library collection and building. Land for a library site had initially been set aside in the laying out of town sections, but this was later reneged. In 1883 land for a library was offered free of charge by Duncan Cameron, a farmer of 'Clunes', and was transferred to the library committee in November of that year.

Also in 1883 the County Council confirmed that it would match subscriptions with a pound for pound subsidy. This, with further fundraising by the Committee, generated sufficient capital for a building to be commissioned. The Committee called for designs for a building in brick and concrete to a budget of not more than £400. They selected an elaborate Elizabethan design by Christchurch architect Thomas Searell, but cost estimates indicated that construction would exceed their budget. An alternative design was drawn by Waimate builder and architect J. S. Walker. The contractor was W. King, also of Waimate.

Walker's design followed a simple Italianate style with an exposed red brick facade accentuated with two projecting concrete courses, concrete architraves and keystones, and cornice and pediment, also in concrete. The words 'Methven Public Library' are set into the cornice in relief and the date '1883' is set into the pediment in stylised numerals. At its completion early in 1884 the 36 by 32 feet (11 x 10 metre) building was divided into five rooms with an entrance hall and corridor. Oak panelling and woodwork was used throughout the building, and rooms were attractively decorated with ornate plasterwork.

While continuously used as a library since 1884, rooms at the Methven Public Library have also been utilised by other groups within the local community such as lodges and school groups. An itinerant dentist also rented rooms for his regular clinic. While the building retains most of its exterior features, the interior was modified extensively in 1941 resulting in the removal of fireplaces, addition of heating and carpet and the installation of shelving.

The Methven Public Library is historically and socially significant for its continuous use as a community library. The building's Italianate style is of architectural interest and contributes considerable aesthetic streetscape value to the town.

Current Use

Civic facilities and recreation - Library

Former Use

Civic facilities and recreation - Library

Construction Professionals

Walker, J.S. - Architect

King, W. - Builder

Construction Dates

Original Construction: 1883 (circa) - 1884 (circa)

Modification: 1941 (circa)

Damaged - Structural Damage from Darfield EQ 4 Sep 2010: 2010

Damaged - Car drove into front of building causing more damage in Dec 2011 (Ashburton Guardian 16 Nov 2012): 2010

Information Sources

Christchurch Star, 10 February 1990, p.6; 29 January 1884, p.4

Ashburton Guardian, 17 June 2000, p.16

The Press, 9 June 1883, p.5

Other Information

A copy of the original report is available from the NZHPT Southern region office

Report Written By

Christine Whybrew

Report Completed

16-Aug-2012

Information on this page is correct to the best of the Trust's knowledge. If you have any additional information you would like to share with the Trust, please contact the Registrar. You may wish to contact the Trust to view our paper records.