

## **National Bank Building**

49-53 Courtenay Place



Photo: *Charles Collins, 2015*

### **Summary of heritage significance**

- This building was designed by C.H. Mitchell of Atkins & Mitchell and is one of a number of impressive buildings he designed in the 1920s and 30s.
- The building was purpose-built for the National Bank, who operated out of this building for 67 years. The building was later used by the ANZ Bank.
- The building is an elegant and imposing Classical building in the Chicago style.
- The façade, above verandah level, remains in original condition and it contributes to the streetscape of the Courtenay Place Heritage Area.

District Plan:	Map 16, reference 63/8 <i>(front façade above ground level, the entrance lobby, the banking chamber, the stair well at the rear of the banking chamber and the main stair well)</i>
Legal Description:	Lot 1 DP6805 & Pt Sec 277 T.O.W.
Heritage Area:	Courtenay Place Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	Not listed.
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	
Key physical dates:	1928
Architect / Builder:	Architect: Atkins & Mitchell - C.H. Mitchell Builder: Fletcher Construction
Former uses:	Bank, offices, retail
Current uses:	Bank, offices, retail
Earthquake Prone Status:	124 Served (SR 167859)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



## 1.0 Outline History

### 1.1 History

The former National Bank Building in Courtenay Place was designed by C.H. Mitchell of Atkins and Mitchell. The permit to erect the building was issued in March 1928 and the work undertaken by Fletcher Construction Co. for £27,982.<sup>1</sup> The building was completed late in 1928.

The National Bank was founded in 1872 and its first Wellington branch opened the following year.<sup>2</sup> By the 1920s the bank was a highly profitable entity, concentrating mainly on rural, personal, and small business customers. This branch was a key part of the commercial development of both Wellington and the wider country. The construction of the Courtenay Place branch was part of a 'building programme' to upgrade the bank's accommodation nationwide and came at a time when it was enjoying strong profits in a buoyant pre-Depression economy.<sup>3</sup> It was a grand statement building designed to replace a smaller building that had been occupied by the National Bank on the site previously.

The ground floor of the Courtenay Place building was in continuous use as a banking chamber, but the bank let the upper floors to a variety of small businesses. On the first floor, a succession of chiropractic firms occupied rooms in the building; Colwill & Colwill in the 1930s and 40s, Lawson & Lawson in the late 1940s and 50s and G.M. Nicholls until 1975. Also on this floor was Mabel Rice, a dressmaker, who shared the floor with the chiropractors from the 1930s to the 1950s. On the next level up, on the mezzanine floor, tenants included such diverse groups as the Wellington Symphony Orchestra, the Labour Department's Weights and Measures Board and a masseur business. The third floor was also occupied by a real variety of tenants, including the NZ Motion Pictures Exhibitors Assn and E.M. Publishing.<sup>4</sup>

The National Bank operated from the building from the time of completion for 67 years. In 1943, at the outbreak of World War II, the bank employed contractors Love Construction to construct an air raid shelter in the basement at a cost of £748 and in accordance with the Emergency Shelter Regulations of 1942.<sup>5</sup> The National Bank remained in the building until 1994 when it relocated across the road to 60 Courtenay Place.<sup>6</sup>

The building was sold to the Papageorgiou family in 2000.<sup>7</sup> The building continued in use as a bank, with ANZ Bank occupying the building until recently. The building contributes significantly to the character of Courtenay Place as the façade is in original condition. Only a modern glazed verandah added in 1981 obstructs views of the ground floor and detracts from the ground floor level.

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<sup>1</sup> Wellington City Council, "National Bank Building", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), COURT13.

<sup>2</sup> The National Bank", Accessed: September 2012, <http://www.nationalbank.co.nz/about/history.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> 'Facts For Investors', *Auckland Star*, 20 August 1928, p.4

<sup>4</sup> Wellington City Council, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area spreadsheet*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

<sup>5</sup> "49-53 Courtenay Place, air raid shelter", February 10, 1943, 00056:281:B22588, Wellington City Archives.

<sup>6</sup> Wellington City Council, "National Bank Building"

<sup>7</sup> Land Title Service, CT WN316/71



Looking southeast along Courtenay Place. The National Bank is the central building with the distinctive cornice, c. late 1920s/early 1930s.  
(PAColl-5482-043, Evening Post Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library)



The National Bank Building with its signage visible, 1968.  
(EP/1968/1133/9-F, Evening Post Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library)

## 1.2 Timeline of modifications

- 1923 Building constructed. (00056:51:B4962)
- 1943 Contractors Love Construction build and air raid shelter in the basement. (00056:281:B22588)
- 1957 Alterations. (00058:13:C627)
- 1978 Additions and alterations. (00058:1142:C49270)
- 1981 Glazed verandah added & lower front exterior altered.<sup>8</sup>
- 1990 Sign (00059:418:E21159)
- 1993 Apartment fit-out. (00060:73:2791)
- 1996 Internal alterations. (00078:1175:25867)
- 1999 Interior alterations. (00078:1178:58250)
- 2000 Interior alterations. (00078:1179:63650)
- 2003 Fit-out of the basement, ground floor and mezzanine. (00078:1251:110214)
- 2005 Office building alterations. (00078:2213:136531)
- 2006 Building alterations. (00078:1947:154890)

## 1.3 Occupation history

National Bank Chambers: National Bank of NZ (Stones 1930 - 1945; Wises 1950-1 to 1990).

First floor: Colwill & Colwill, chiropractors (Stones 1930 - 1940); Lawson & Lawson, chiropractors (Stones 1945; Wises 1950-1). G.M. Nicholls, chiropractor (Wises 1955 - 1975). Mabel Rice, dressmaker (Stones 1930 - 1945; Wises 1950-1).

Mezzanine floor: Cambell McAllister, public accountant (Stones 1935 - 1940); Westcoast Investments (Stones 1935); Wellington Symphony Orchestra, registered office (Stones 1940); Labour Department, Weights & Measures Branch (Stones 1945; Wises 1950-1 to 1961-2); Teachers' Refresher Course Comm. (Wises 1967-8); Australasian Construction Co. Ltd. (Wises 1971-2 to 1975). Second floor: Mr & Mrs William Barke, masseurs (Stones 1930 - 1945; Wises 1950-1 to 1967-8).

Third floor: NZ Motion Pictures Exhibitors Assn. (Stones 1930 - 1945; Wises 1950-1 to 1961-2 & 1985); Turnbull & Jones Ltd. (Wises 1971-2); Mutual Film Insurance Board (Stones 1945; Wises 1961-2). Olympic Trading Co. Ltd. (Wises 1975 - 1980). R E M Publishing (Wises 1980 - 1990).<sup>9</sup>

## 1.4 Architect

C.H. Mitchell

The firm of Atkins and Bacon was established in Wellington in 1908 by Alfred Atkins (1850-1919) and Roger Bacon. Cyril Hawthorn Mitchell (1891-1949) was taken on as a draughtsman in 1909 and became a partner in 1918. This partnership was shortlived, however, as Roger Bacon moved to Blenheim, owing to failing health, and Alfred Atkins died in 1919 leaving the young Mitchell on his own.

Mitchell built up the firm of Atkins and Mitchell, renaming it Mitchell and Mitchell when joined by his brother Allan Hawthorn Mitchell (1905-1973) in 1932. The firm of

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<sup>8</sup> Wellington City Council, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area spreadsheet*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

<sup>9</sup> Wellington City Council, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area spreadsheet*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

Mitchell and Mitchell continued as Gooch, Mitchell and Macdiarmid and was later dissolved.

During his time in the firm (1909-1949) C H Mitchell was responsible for such buildings as the Commercial Travellers Club Building (1929), The Waterloo Hotel (1936), the Central Fire Station (1935) and M L C Building, 33-37 Hunter Street, (1940). He was the architect to the Reserve Bank of New Zealand and studied the construction of banking chambers in Europe.<sup>10</sup>

## **2.0 Physical description**

### **2.1 Architecture**

The National Bank is a tall five-storey concrete building with a Chicago-esque base-shaft-capital composition trimmed out in simplified neo-Classical detail above the street level and with an impressive Doric temple-like façade at street level, featuring fluted Doric columns and some interesting ironwork. This building is disfigured by a modern glass verandah.<sup>11</sup>

Today there are no existing original plans for the building.

### **2.2 Materials**

- Steel structure encased in concrete
- Concrete walls and floors
- A flat concrete roof with an asphalt finish
- Steel windows

### **2.3 Setting**

The National Bank Building is located near the western end of the block of buildings on the south side of Courtenay Place, bounded by Cambridge Terrace and Tory Street. Most of the buildings in this block are two-storeyed, with the notable exception of the Athenic Building adjacent, and the National Bank building itself. The general area itself is low in scale, with only the Courtenay Chambers, further east and seven storeys high, of any significant size. The National Bank Building is one of the more prominent features of the Courtenay Place Heritage Area, which encompasses the concentration of heritage buildings in the eastern half of Courtenay Place.

## **3.0 Sources**

Kelly, Michael and Russell Murray, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area Report*. Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006.

"The National Bank", Accessed: September 2012,  
<http://www.nationalbank.co.nz/about/history.aspx>

Wellington City Council, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area spreadsheet*. Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006.

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<sup>10</sup> Wellington City Council, "National Bank", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 1995*. (Wellington City Council, 1995), C.

<sup>11</sup> Adapted from: Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area Report*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

Wellington City Council, *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 1995*. Wellington City Council, 1995.

Wellington City Council, *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. Wellington City Council, 2001.

## **Newspapers**

'Facts For Investors', *Auckland Star*, 20 August 1928, p.4

## **Wellington City Archives**

"49-53 Courtenay Place, building", March 23, 1928, 00056:51:B4962, Wellington City Archives.

"49-53 Courtenay Place, air raid shelter", February 10, 1943, 00056:281:B22588, Wellington City Archives.

"49-53 Courtenay Place, alterations", February 14, 1957, 00058:13:C627, Wellington City Archives.

"49-53 Courtenay Place, additions and alterations", April 19, 1978, 00058:1142:C49270, Wellington City Archives.

"49-51 Courtenay Place, sign", 1990, 00059:418:E21159, Wellington City Archives.

"49 Courtenay Place, fitout apartment", October 29, 1993, 00060:73:2791, Wellington City Archives.

"49 Courtenay Place, internal alterations", 1996, 00078:1175:25867, Wellington City Archives.

"49 and 53 Courtenay Place, interior alterations", 1999, 00078:1178:58250, Wellington City Archives.

"49 Courtenay Place, interior alterations", 2000, 00078:1179:63650, Wellington City Archives.

"49 Courtenay Place, fit-out, basement, ground floor and mezzanine", 2003, 00078:1251:110214, Wellington City Archives.

"49-53 Courtenay Place, office building alterations, level 1", 2005, 00078:2213:136531, Wellington City Archives.

"49 Courtenay Place, office building alterations", 2006, 00078:1947:154890, Wellington City Archives.

## Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance

### **Cultural heritage values**

#### **Aesthetic Value:**

**Architectural:** *Does the item have architectural or artistic value for characteristics that may include its design, style, era, form, scale, materials, colour, texture, patina of age, quality of space, craftsmanship, smells, and sounds?*

The building is an elegant and imposing Classical building in the Chicago style.

**Townscape:** *Does the item have townscape value for the part it plays in defining a space or street; providing visual interest; its role as a landmark; or the contribution it makes to the character and sense of place of Wellington?*

The building makes a significant contribution to the character of Courtenay Place.

**Group:** *Is the item part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use?*

The building is part of the Courtenay Place Heritage Area, an area with a significant collection of heritage buildings of various styles and scales.

#### **Historic Value:**

**Association:** *Is the item associated with an important person, group, or organisation?*

The building was designed by Wellington architectural firm Atkins & Mitchell.

The building is associated with the National Bank, who operated out of this building for 67 years. The usage of the building for banking later continued when the ANZ Bank took over the premises in 2004.

**Association:** *Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?*

The building is part of the commercial development and banking history of inner-city Wellington.

#### **Scientific Value:**

**Archaeological:** *Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?*

There was pre-1900 human activity on this site. Although some of the sites have been altered by rebuilding or landscaping or subdivisional change, there is archaeological value in the immediate surrounds.

**Educational:** *Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?*

**Technological:** *Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?*

#### **Social Value:**



**Public esteem:** *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

**Symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual:** *Does the item have symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual or other cultural value for the community who has used and continues to use it?*

**Identity/Sense of place/Continuity:**  
*Is the item a focus of community, regional, or national identity?  
Does the item contribute to sense of place or continuity?*

This building is part of a group of commercial buildings on Courtenay Place which contribute to the sense of place and continuity of the Courtenay Place Heritage Area.

**Sentiment/Connection:** *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

**Level of cultural heritage significance**

**Rare:** *Is the item rare, unique, unusual, seminal, influential, or outstanding?*

**Representative:** *Is the item a good example of the class it represents?*

It is representative of New Zealand banks built in the 1920s – particularly those of the National Bank.

**Authentic:** *Does the item have authenticity or integrity because it retains significant fabric from the time of its construction or from later periods when important additions or modifications were carried out?*

The building has a high level of authenticity of external design, materials and craftsmanship.

**Local/Regional/National/International**

*Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?*

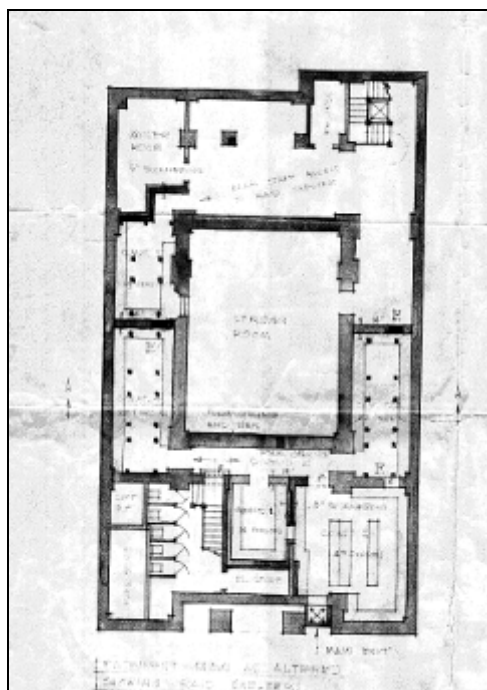
This building is of local importance for its contribution to the Courtenay Place Heritage Area.

## 4.0 Appendix

### Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory	Y	
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
WCC Records – building file	Y	
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)		
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
Plan change?		
Heritage Area Report		
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	Y	
Heritage items folder (electronic)		
HPT website		
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	Nothing

### Background research



The basement was fitted out as an air raid shelter in 1943.  
(00056:281:B22588)

**WCC Permits**

00056:51 :B4962	49-53 Courtenay Place, building	Owner: National Bank. Builder: Fletcher Construction. Legal description: Part Section 277 Town of Wellington, Lot 1 DP 6805. Application value: £27,962. Note: Contains documentation only, does not contain plans.	Building Permit/Consent	23 Mar 1928
00056:28 1:B22588	49-53 Courtenay Place, air raid shelter	Legal description: Lots 2 and 4 DP 277. Owner: National Bank. Builder: Love Construction Co	Building Permit/Consent	10 Feb 1943
00058:13 :C627	49-53 Courtenay Place, alterations	Owner: National Bank of NZ Ltd. Builder: AW Cooke. Legal description: Lots 2 and 4 DP 277. Application value: £715.	Building Permit/Consent	14 Feb 1957
00058:11 42:C4927 0	49-53 Courtenay Place, additions and alterations	Owner: National Bank. Builder: D A Bagust. Legal description: Lots 2 and 4 DP 277. Application value: \$19,000.	Building Permit/Consent	19 Apr 1978
00059:41 8:E21159	49-51 Courtenay Place, sign		Building Permit/Consent	1990
00060:73 :2791	49 Courtenay Place, fitout apartment		Building Permit/Consent	29 Oct 1993
00078:11 75:25867	49 Courtenay Place, internal alterations	Owner: Ulysses Trust Partnership. Applicant: D A De Terte. Legal Description: DP 6805 and Pt Section 277 Town of Wellington. Application value: \$1,500. Note: National Bank.	Building Permit/Consent	1996
00078:11 78:58250	49 and 53 Courtenay Place, interior alterations	Owner: Ulysses Trust. Applicant: Tse Group Ltd. Legal Description: DP 6805 and Pt Sec 277 Town of Wellington. Application value: \$400,000. Note: National Bank Building.	Building Permit/Consent	1999
00078:11 79:63650	49 Courtenay Place, interior alterations	Owner: Ulysses Trust. Applicant: Tse Group Ltd. Legal Description: DP 6805 and Pt Sec 277 Town of Wellington. Application value: \$60,000. Note: National Bank Building.	Building Permit/Consent	2000
00078:12 51:110214	49 Courtenay Place, fit-out, basement, ground floor and mezzanine	Owner: Ulysses Trust. Applicant: Opus International Consultants. Legal Description: DP 6805 and Pt Sec 277 Town of Wellington. Application Value: \$700,000.	Building Permit/Consent	2003
00078:22 13:136531	49-53 Courtenay Place, office building alterations, level 1	Owner: Georgina Artemis Papageorgiou. Applicant: Foster Architects. Legal description: Lot 1 DP 6805 , Pt Sec 277 Town Of Wellington. Application value: \$5,000. Note: National/ANZ Bank Building.	Building Permit/Consent	2005
00078:19 47:15489 0	49 Courtenay Place, office building alterations	Owner: Ulysses Trust. Applicant: Foster Architects. Legal description: Lot 1 DP 6805. Application value: \$10,000.	Building Permit/Consent	2006