

Chief Post Office

125-136 The Square, Palmerston North

NZHPT Registration Number:	1255
NZHPT Registration Type:	Historic Place – Category II
NZHPT Registration Date:	02/07/82
City/District Council:	Palmerston North City Council
District Plan Status:	Category 2



Brief History

Construction of this building, Palmerston North's fourth purpose-built Post Office, began in 1905. The plans were prepared by prominent Wellington-based architect, Joshua Charlesworth whose work includes the Wellington Town Hall (1901) and seventeen branches of the Bank of New Zealand around the country (1907-17). The two-storey building is typical of the Edwardian Italianate style favoured at the time for commercial and entertainment building types. Design was marked by an asymmetrical tower with loggia underneath, classical stringcourse, parapets, cornices, and windows with pedimented head. The elegant tower housed a four-faced clock with chimes.

The building was constructed of brick with cement render and timber windows and the building work was carried out by local firm J Trevor and Son who also operated an important brick making business in Boundary Road (now Tremaine Avenue). Prime Minister and Postmaster-General Sir Joseph Ward officially opened the building in 1906. The local Member of Parliament William Wood had persuaded the New Zealand Government to meet half of the cost of the building and his wife Mrs WT Wood led the local fundraising campaign to raise the remaining money. On June 3 1906, Mrs Wood opened and started the clock and chimes and christened them Kerei Te Panau after a local Rangitāne kaumātua (elder).

Extensions were made to the Square and Main Street elevations in the early 1920s and again in 1937 and the architectural features were largely matched. The tower, parapets and other embellishments to the façade of the building were removed in 1942 as a precaution following the Wairarapa earthquake. In 1957 the clock was reinstated in the new Hopwood clock tower donated to the city by local businessman, Arthur Hopwood. The building served as the city's Post Office until 1988 when New Zealand Post moved to new premises on the corner of Main Street and Princess Street though Postbank continued to occupy the building for several years. Today the building accommodates a café/bar, a second bar and conference facilities.

Principal Sources:

Bowman, I & Kelly, M, *Palmerston North CBD Heritage Inventory*. Palmerston North, Palmerston North City Council, 1993.

Palmerston North Heritage Trails Working Party, *The Square Walk*. 1994.

Petersen GC, *Palmerston North, A Centennial History*. Wellington, AH & AWReed, 1973.

Ian Matheson City Archives, A175/429.

Palmerston North City Library Photograph Collection Po2, 3, 5-13, 15, 16-19, 24, 27, 29-33; Z5139; Sq 13-16, 19, 24, 25, 30, 41-43, 241, 245, 277, 326; Hopwood clock tower Sq 134, 205.