

**Star Boating Club**  
Taranaki Street Wharf



Image: *Charles Collins, 2015*

**Summary of heritage significance**

- The Star Boating club building has architectural and technological significance as it was specifically designed by the eminent architect William Chatfield to facilitate its relocation, responding to the ongoing reclamation of Wellington's waterfront.
- The building has high historical significance given its continuous association with the Star Boating Club, one of the oldest rowing and sporting clubs in New Zealand. The building has also had a significant historical association with New Zealand's longest running professional theatre, Downstage.
- This distinctive building contributes greatly to the streetscape and, along with the neighbouring Wellington Rowing Club building occupies a prominent place on the waterfront.

District Plan:	Map 17, reference 285
Legal Description:	Lots 201 202 206 207 DP 67374
Heritage Area:	
HPT Listed:	Category I, reference 1431
Archaeological Site:	Reclaimed land
Other Names:	97 Jervois Quay
Key physical dates:	Built: 1885-6, moved: 1889 and 1989
Architect / Builder:	W.C. Chatfield / Builders: W. Fitzgerald & E. Connal
Former uses:	Star Boating Club boatshed and pavilion
Current uses:	Star Boating Club boatshed and pavilion
Earthquake Prone Status:	<i>Awaiting assessment</i>

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



City View, January 2013

## 1.0 Outline History

### 1.1 History

The Star Boating Club Building on Wellington's waterfront was built specifically for the club in 1886, and the club still occupies this building today.<sup>1</sup>

The Star Boating Club was formed in 1866. It was the first rowing club established in Wellington and is one of the oldest sporting clubs in New Zealand. It was originally formed by whaling boat owners keen on racing, and whale boats remained in club competitions until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Initially, the club was housed in a shed erected near the site of the Cenotaph, but harbour reclamation and the resulting loss of their waterfront position resulted in the club relocating to another shed in 1874. Further reclamations during 1883 meant that the club needed to move again. This led to the construction of the Star Boating Club Building.

The Star Boating Club Building was purpose built for the club. It was designed by architect William Chatfield, himself a club member. Given that the club's previous boatsheds had been affected by harbour reclamations, the new building was built on skids so that it could be relocated easily. It was erected in 1886 and was originally sited on Customhouse Quay on land which was reclaimed, this project being paid for by club members. The building was constructed by W. Fitzgerald and E. Connal, and the two storey design provided space for storing boats on the ground floor and social areas upstairs.

Only three years later, in 1889, it became necessary to move the clubrooms due to ongoing harbour reclamations. The building was moved by steam engine to the site on Jervois Quay it then occupied for 100 years. It is possibly the only building in New Zealand relocated in this way. It was later joined there by the Wellington Rowing Club building, Odlins Building and later still, in 1932, by the Wellington Free Ambulance Building.

The club was once possibly the largest athletic club in the Southern Hemisphere, boasting 390 members prior to World War One. Founded by H.F. Logan, J.C. Boddington and R. Kirton, among others, the Star Boating Club has had a number of prominent members, including Olympic athlete George Cooke and former Governor General and recipient of the VC, Lord Freyberg. In 1945, the exterior of the eastern end of the building was slightly damaged by fire, and the clubrooms were renovated the same year. In 1965, the building was renovated in time for the Star Boating Club's centennial celebrations.

The building has also played an important part in the history of the Downstage Theatre, New Zealand's longest running professional theatre, who occupied the clubrooms between 1969 and 1973. During that time modifications were made to the upper storey of the building, while the rowing club continued to operate from the ground floor. During Downstage's time in the building performers included many of New Zealand's most successful actors.

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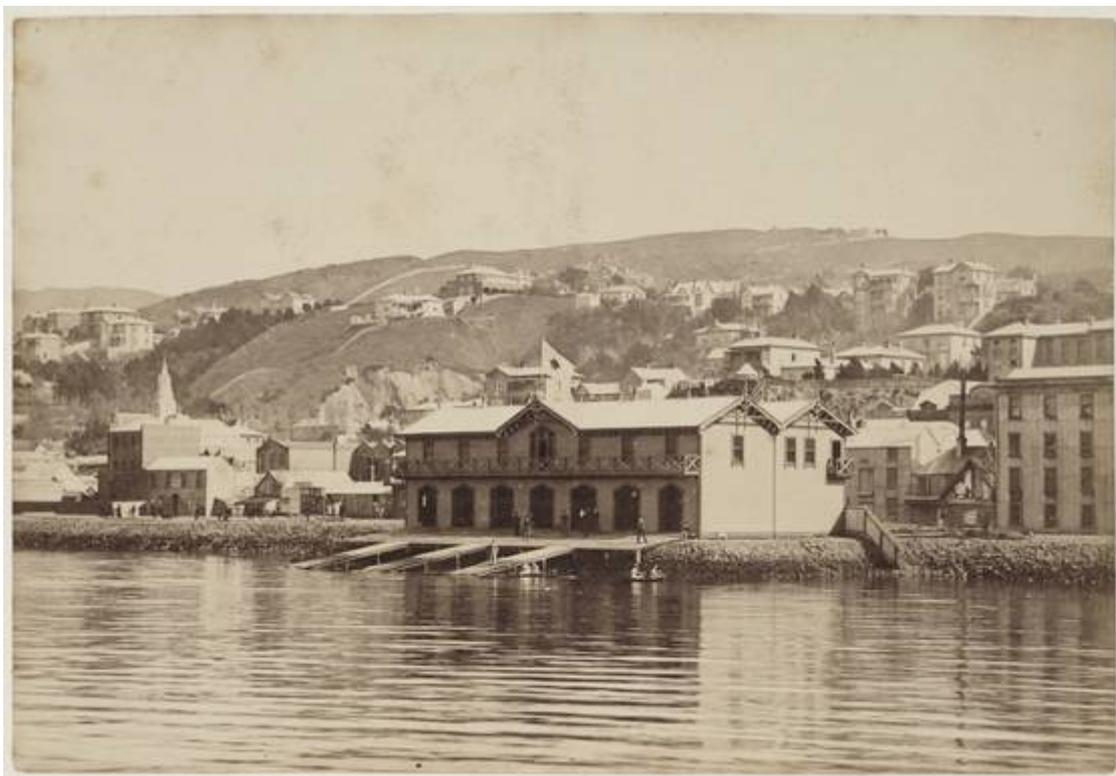
<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise referenced this history is taken from: Chloe Searle and Alison Dangerfield, *Star Boating Club Building*, Historic Places Trust website, 2009, <http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=1431>

<sup>2</sup> Wellington City Council, "Taranaki Street Wharf: Star Boating Club," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), TARAW2.

The motivation to rent the building to Downstage was to raise funds in order to build new clubrooms, as the prospect of demolishing the building and relocating the club had been discussed by the Council and the club for some time. In the end, the club lobbied against relocation and instead undertook renovations to the clubhouse in order to meet council requirements.

However, in 1989 the building was relocated to its present site as part of the redevelopment of Wellington's waterfront, and was extensively refurbished, including replacing the skids with a new foundation. For the first time in its existence the building faced the city rather than the sea. The Wellington Rowing Club building was also relocated, maintaining the close relationship between the buildings and clubs themselves. The Star Boating Club Building has since been used as an events venue and as such it has had a significant association with cultural life in Wellington. Events held there have included the 1992 Fringe Festival, the 1993 Gay and Lesbian Devotion Festival, and the International Festival of the Arts in 1994 and 1996. It also continues to be a popular venue for weddings, conferences and other functions. Now on its third site, the building retains its original purpose as the clubrooms for the Star Boating Club. The club continues to attract rowers and has close links with secondary school rowing.

While rowing was a popular sport, only a few of the older boatsheds remain. The Canterbury Rowing Club's building, along with those the other Christchurch rowing clubs had on the river Avon are no longer standing. In Auckland, the original St George's Rowing Club building no longer remains. Currently there are only two boatsheds included on the New Zealand Historic Places Trust Register, the Wellington Rowing Club and the Wanganui Rowing Club. The Wellington Rowing Club was not a purpose built clubrooms and the Wanganui Rowing Club now functions as a museum. The Star Boating Club Building is older than both these buildings and it is the only one to have had a continuous association with rowing.<sup>3</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Chloe Searle and Alison Dangerfield, *Star Boating Club Building*

The Star Boating Club in the 1880s (Ref: PA1-q-089-18-1. Alexander Turnbull Library, <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22739732>)



Star Boating Club, seen from the harbour looking towards Jervois Quay, 1888 (Ref: 1/2-004072-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22517934>)



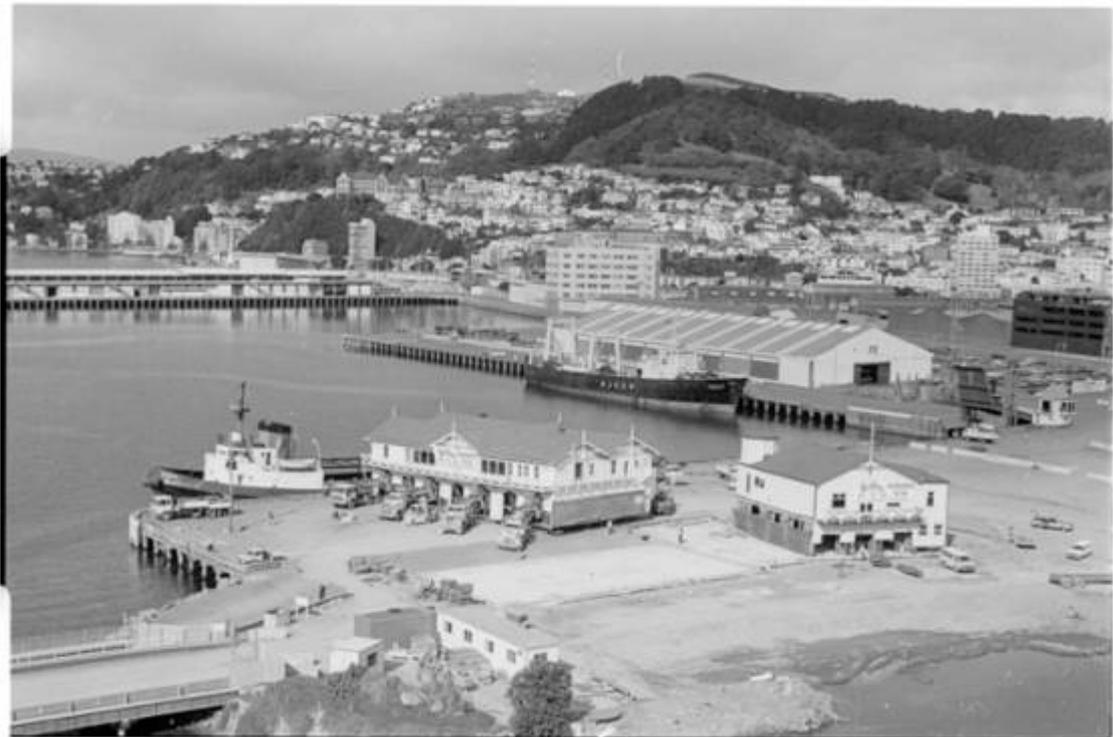
A crowd gathered at the Wellington waterfront to farewell the Second Contingent departing for the South African War in January 1900. The Star Boating Club and the Wellington Naval Artillery Volunteers building are visible (Ref: 1/2-062513-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23086882>)



Crowd at the opening of the 1908 rowing season at the Star Boating Club. (Sydney Charles Smith, Ref: 1/1-019354-G. Alexander Turnbull Library. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22908764>)



From Right: Free Ambulance building, Star Boating Club and Wellington Rowing Club, 1975. (*Evening Post*, Ref: 1/4-022671-F. Alexander Turnbull Library. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22777000>)



Star Boating Club being moved into position beside the Wellington Rowing Club building at the end of Taranaki Street Wharf. Shows Mount Victoria in the background. (*Evening Post*, September 1989, Ref: EP/1989/3286/13-F. Alexander Turnbull Library. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22301295>)

## 1.2 Timeline of modifications

Not assessed

## 1.3 Architect

### **Chatfield, William Charles (1851/52 - 1930)** <sup>4</sup>

William Chatfield was born in Sussex and educated in Brixton, Surrey.<sup>5</sup> He came to New Zealand at the age of 16 in 1867 and was immediately engaged in architectural work. He joined the Public Service in 1872 as Chief Draughtsman and Assistant Paymaster and Engineer in the Engineer's Department of the Wellington Provincial Government. He held these positions until 1876 when provincial government was abolished. During this time he worked on the Thorndon reclamation and designed many bridges.<sup>6</sup>

He went into private practice in 1876 and designed several large office and warehouse buildings such Kings Chambers, corner Willis and Willeston Streets (1902), the Wellington Opera House (1886) and the Colonial Mutual Insurance Building, corner Customhouse Quay and Willeston Street (1897). He also designed Stewart Dawson's Building (1900), and 241 Cuba Street (1908).

Chatfield's buildings were characterised by their enormous strength resulting from the use of heavy masonry reinforced with railway irons for foundations, cornices and columns.

Chatfield contributed to the foundation and development of the New Zealand Institute of Architects and was elected first president for the 1905-6 term. He was re-elected for the following term, 1906-7, and again in 1914-15. He also worked toward the placing of the New Zealand Institute of Architects Act 1913, on the Statute Book.

## 2.0 Physical description

### 2.1 Architecture

The Star Boating Club is a simple rectangular building of two stories, with a plain balcony on the first floor facing the lagoon. The design is straightforward and unpretentious, with a subtle yet distinct nautical flavour. The roof consists of two long paired gables, with a central small gable in the middle of each long elevation. Each gable is capped with a finial and the projecting eaves are studded with wooden brackets. The gable form is echoed in the boat-shed doorways on the ground floor. The rhythm of these openings is a simple and effective one.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Wellington City Council, "Appendix III", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> Cyclopedica Co. Ltd, "Chatfield, William Charles," in *The Cyclopedica of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District* (Wellington: The Cyclopedica Company Limited, 1897), accessed January 28, 2013 <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d33.html>

<sup>6</sup> Historic Places Trust, "Chatfield, William Charles", *Professional Biographies*, accessed January 28 2013, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Chatfield,+William+Charles>

<sup>7</sup> Wellington City Council, "Taranaki Street Wharf: Star Boating Club"

The Star Boating Club building was purpose built to be relocated as harbour reclamation occurred. It was built on skids to facilitate easy relocation by steam engine.

The Star Boating Club is of architectural significance. It is the work of prominent Wellington architect, and club member, William Chatfield who showed an astute grasp of the requirements for its design so that it continues to be suited to its purpose after a significant length of time. The building has value for its unique design as a boatshed and pavilion. It combines nautical themes and a lively and picturesque view with a structure devoted to the particular needs of its users. The ultimately vital design-to-move structure through the use of skids is a specific design solution that showed an understanding of future pressures. The large open ground floor interior of structural timber is practical and spare but has the appealing patina of long use. The Star Boating Club has value for its exterior design. Despite being essentially a large shed, the building is striking for its rhythm and symmetry in the pattern of doors and windows. These features, along with its gables and balconies, were designed to give an eye-catching appeal of a domestic scale and allow the large shed to dazzle or impress.<sup>8</sup>

## **2.2 Materials**

The construction is timber, with rusticated weatherboards and a corrugated iron roof. Timbers used in the construction include kauri, heart matai and other indigenous heart timbers.

## **2.3 Setting**

The Star Boating Club Building occupies a prominent place on the Wellington waterfront. This building, along with the neighbouring Wellington Rowing Club, have strong associations for Wellingtonians and provide a visible reminder of Wellington's long standing connections with the harbour. The distinctive Star Boating Club Building and its decorative features contribute greatly to the streetscape in the surrounding area and is a defining building of the harbour coastline.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Chloe Searle and Alison Dangerfield, *Star Boating Club Building*

<sup>9</sup> Chloe Searle and Alison Dangerfield, *Star Boating Club Building*

### 3.0 Sources

Cyclopedia Co. Ltd, "Chatfield, William Charles," in *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District* (Wellington: The Cyclopaedia Company Limited, 1897), accessed January 28, 2013 <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d33.html>

"District Plan: Heritage building – Star Boating Club & Wellington Rowing Club", 1999, 1041-06-STA Vol. 1, Wellington City Council Records.

Historic Places Trust, "Chatfield, William Charles", *Professional Biographies*, accessed January 28 2013, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Chatfield,+William+Charles>

Searle, Chloe, and Alison Dangerfield, *Star Boating Club Building*, Historic Places Trust website, 2009, <http://www.historic.org.nz/TheRegister/RegisterSearch/RegisterResults.aspx?RID=1431>

Wellington City Council, "Taranaki Street Wharf: Star Boating Club," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), TARAW2.

Wellington City Council, "Appendix III", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001).

## 4.0 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 Star Boating Club is a fine example of a Victorian boating clubhouse. It is one of only a few purpose-built boating club buildings in New Zealand to have survived into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the only one that remains in its original use.

***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?

This building, along with the neighbouring Wellington Rowing Club, forms an important element in the Wellington waterfront alongside Frank Kitts Park.

***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 has group value for its association with other heritage buildings, particularly the Wellington Rowing Club Building, and also including Odlin's and the Wellington Free Ambulance Building.

#### **Historic Value:**

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

The Star Boating Club Building is of outstanding historical significance for several reasons. The club has operated continuously since 1866 and has been associated with this building since it was purpose built for the club in 1886.

It has also had a significant association with the Downstage Theatre, New Zealand's longest running professional theatre company. While operating out the Star Boating Club a large number of notable New Zealand actors performed for Downstage.

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

The club is the oldest sporting club in Wellington, and one of the oldest sporting clubs in New Zealand. It is also the third oldest rowing club in New Zealand. Rowing was a popular sport and the club was once likely to have been the largest athletic club in the Southern Hemisphere.

During the First and Second World Wars the building also played an important role in the community, becoming the base for a number of groups such as the St. Johns Ambulance Brigade, the Red Cross and various patriotic committees.

#### **Scientific Value:**

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

Reclamation

**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?*

The Star Boating Club building is of technological significance as it was purpose built to be relocated as harbour reclamation occurred. It was built on skids to facilitate easy relocation and was relocated by steam engine only three years after its original construction. It is likely to be the only building in Wellington designed to be relocated in this way, and it is probable that is the only building in New Zealand to have been transported in this way. When the building was relocated for a second time, in 1989, the skids were replaced by a new foundation. Although the skids have been replaced, the building retains its technological value for the foresight and practicality of this design feature.

**Social Value:**

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

The building is likely to be held in high public esteem as it is an attractive, picturesque building set within the recreational zone of the Wellington Waterfront.

**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?*

Despite many alterations, and its removal to a new site in the early 1990s, the building has been a key element on Wellington's waterfront for over 120 years and contributes to the sense of place and continuity of the waterfront recreational precinct.

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

The Star Boating Club building is of social significance as the clubrooms for the Star Boating Club. Club members have included prominent New Zealanders such as Lord Freyberg and Olympic athlete George Cooke. In addition to this the building is also significant as it has been the venue for prominent cultural events, such as the International Festival of Arts, the Fringe Festival and the 1999 and 2000 NZ TV2 Laugh Festival. The building is also of value for its use to the community, having been used by numerous other clubs and community groups since the First World War. It continues to be used as a popular venue for weddings and other events and was also the venue for one of NZ's first Civil Unions immediately following adoption of the Civil Union Bill by Parliament, at which the Mayor of Wellington was the celebrant.

**Level of cultural heritage significance**

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

The Star Boating Club Building is rare in that it is one of the only boatsheds of its age that continues to be used by its founding club, and as such is part of New Zealand's sporting heritage.

Along with its companion, the Wellington Rowing Club, this building is a notably rare central city timber building.

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

***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?*

Despite being relocated several times and renovated, this building retains a high level of authenticity.

***Local/Regional/National/International***

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

The building is nationally significant due to its rarity.

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## 5.0 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		
Heritage items folder (electronic)	Y	
HPT website	Y	
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)		

### Background research

*Insert any relevant background information into this section. This may include:*

- *Additional plans, such as those for alterations*
- *Chunks of text from other sources such as Cyclopedia of NZ, Papers Past*
- *Additional images*