

Former National/Dominion Museum and National Art Gallery

7 Buckle Street



Image: *Charles Collins, 2013*

Summary of heritage significance

- This building possesses outstanding architectural value; it is one of the two best examples of Stripped Classical architecture in New Zealand, alongside the Auckland War Memorial Museum. It is a significant design by the practice of Gummer and Ford who are considered to be one of the most outstanding architecture practices of the 20th century.
- The former National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum is a historically significant building for the role that it has played in both national and local cultural life. It is a representative of the aspirations that New Zealand held as a developing nation, particularly in the inter-war period.
- The building is a significant landmark that is sited on the northern slopes of Mount Cook (Puke Ahu) and is visible from many parts of the city and the hills around.

District Plan:	Map 16, reference 41
Legal Description:	Lot 2 DP 87064
Heritage Area:	N/A
HPT Listed:	Category 1, reference 1409
Archaeological Site:	NZAA Central City R27/270
Other Names:	Dominion Museum and National Art Gallery, National Museum and Art Gallery, Massey University
Key physical dates:	Built 1933-36
Architect / Builder:	Architect: Gummer and Ford, Builder: Fletcher
Former uses:	Civic facilities and recreation – Museum and Art Gallery
Current uses:	Education - University
Earthquake Prone Status:	Not listed as EQProne 2014

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

The former Dominion Museum and National Art Gallery, also known as the National Museum, completed in 1936 was the home of many of New Zealand's most important treasures and is also one of the best examples of Stripped Classical design in New Zealand.

The former National Museum had its origins in the establishment of the Colonial Museum in 1865. Later renamed the Dominion Museum (1907) it was built in the Government Reserve behind the General Assembly (later Parliament Buildings). The first director of the museum was James Hector "the father of New Zealand science". It was his successor, Augustus Hamilton, who began pressing the Government for a new building to house the large and ever growing collection. However, it was not until 1924 that the Government agreed to set aside money for the construction of a new facility, with a condition that any subsidy had to be matched by public donation. The Government promised a sum of £75, 000 later increased to £100,000, the remaining amount was met by public subscription.¹

In 1928, an approach was made by the Carillon Society which had cast bells for a memorial. It was decided to incorporate the National War Memorial and Carillon on the site as well. The New Zealand Academy of Fine Arts agreed to contribute its properties and collections to the new museum as long as they would be permanently housed there. This was achieved by the passing of the National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum Act 1930. The site chosen for the museum, which would now also incorporate the National War Memorial and Carillon, as well as the National Art Gallery, was that of the former Mt Cook Barracks, and from 1870, the brick Mt Cook gaol. A national architecture competition was held to find a suitable designer for what was being recognised as the most important public buildings to be constructed at the time. The competition was won by Auckland architectural firm Gummer and Ford.²

The Mt Cook gaol was demolished and construction of the first structure – the Carillon, which was opened in 1932 (the hall of memories was not officially completed until 1964) began. The construction of the museum building began in 1933 to Gummer and Ford's design, a monumental and imposing structure of three storeys in the Stripped Classical style. It was constructed in reinforced concrete and partially faced with Putaruru stone. The roof was clad with copper sheathing and glass. A large central portico supported by square fluted pillars dominates the main façade.

The internal spaces were constructed around a main gallery, known as the Maori Hall. The National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum was officially opened in 1936 by the Governor General Viscount Galway on the 1st of August.³

During World War Two the building was closed to the public and used for defence purposes. At this time a number of underground structures were built beneath the

¹ Wellington City Council. "Former National Museum of New Zealand." *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001). BUCK7.

² Wellington City Council. "Former National Museum of New Zealand."

³ Wellington City Council. "Former National Museum of New Zealand."

museum. The collections were moved out of the building for the duration of the war. It was not until 1949 that the museum reopened for the public.⁴

The museum was renamed the National Museum in 1972, but it was soon facing the same problems that it had in the time of Augustus Hamilton – its collection was quickly outgrowing the space. Temporary space was found in the nearby Mt Cook Police Station but the lack of space was becoming an ever pressing concern.⁵ The government, in answer to this, established a project development board and the decision was made to move the collections to a new purpose built site. In 1992 the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Act was established that would combine the National Art Gallery and Museum to form the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, known as Te Papa. A competition was then held to design a new building on the Wellington Waterfront that would accommodate the museum and art gallery collections. In 1996 the National/Dominion Museum and National Art Gallery closed and in 1998 Te Papa opened.⁶

The building and associated land were then transferred to the Wellington Tenth Trust. The Trust in association with Massey University redeveloped the building and established it as a part of the Massey University Wellington Campus. This included a renovation of the great hall, and the re-fit of the tea garden as a place for teaching and seminars. Construction and renovation of lecture theatres as well as staff accommodation was also carried out at this time. The work was undertaken by Fletcher Construction and was completed in January 2001. The Massey University building – Tokomaru, as it is now called, is the home of the College of Creative Arts.⁷

This building is now considered to be one of the most significant public buildings constructed in the interwar period, and a major achievement for the architecture firm Gummer and Ford. The design is one of the two best examples in New Zealand of the Stripped Classical architecture style, the other being the Auckland War Memorial Museum.

The Wellington building occupies a dominant site and the building remains visible from a number of different streets. It also helps to create one of New Zealand's best architectural precincts along with National War Memorial and Carillon. The area to the north of the Carillon and War Memorial is currently being redeveloped (2013-14) to form the National War Memorial Park. The park will be a large open space and has been designed to suit the commemorative ceremonies planned for the Centenary of the First World War. State Highway 1 will be diverted into a tunnel and the space above ground will be re-configured to form a park with views across the city. The park should be completed in time for the Anzac Day 2015 commemorations.

⁴ Helen McCracken, *National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum (former)*, (Historic Places Trust unpublished registration report), 10 September, 2008.

⁵ McCracken, *National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum (former)*.

⁶ Wellington City Council. "Former National Museum of New Zealand."

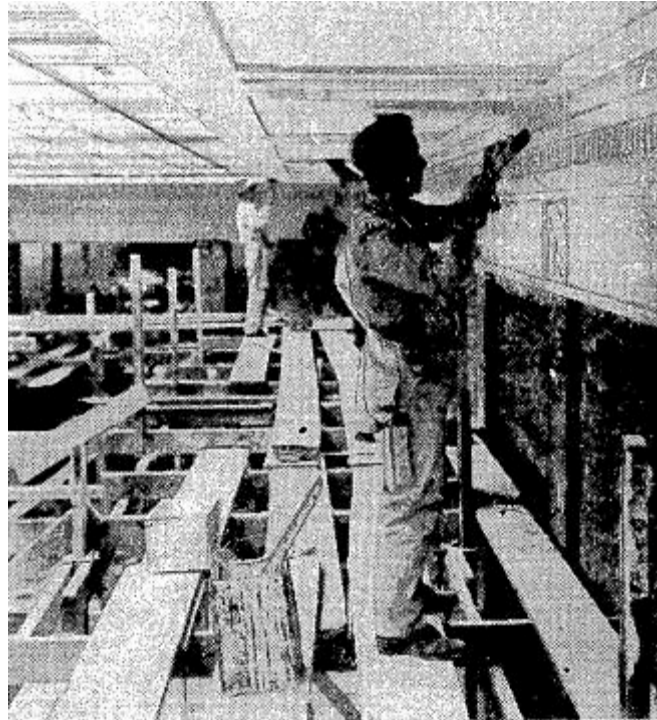
⁷ McCracken, *National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum (former)*.



Dominion Museum Committee. Negatives of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: EP-3876-1/2-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand, accessed 3/5/2013, <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23252624>

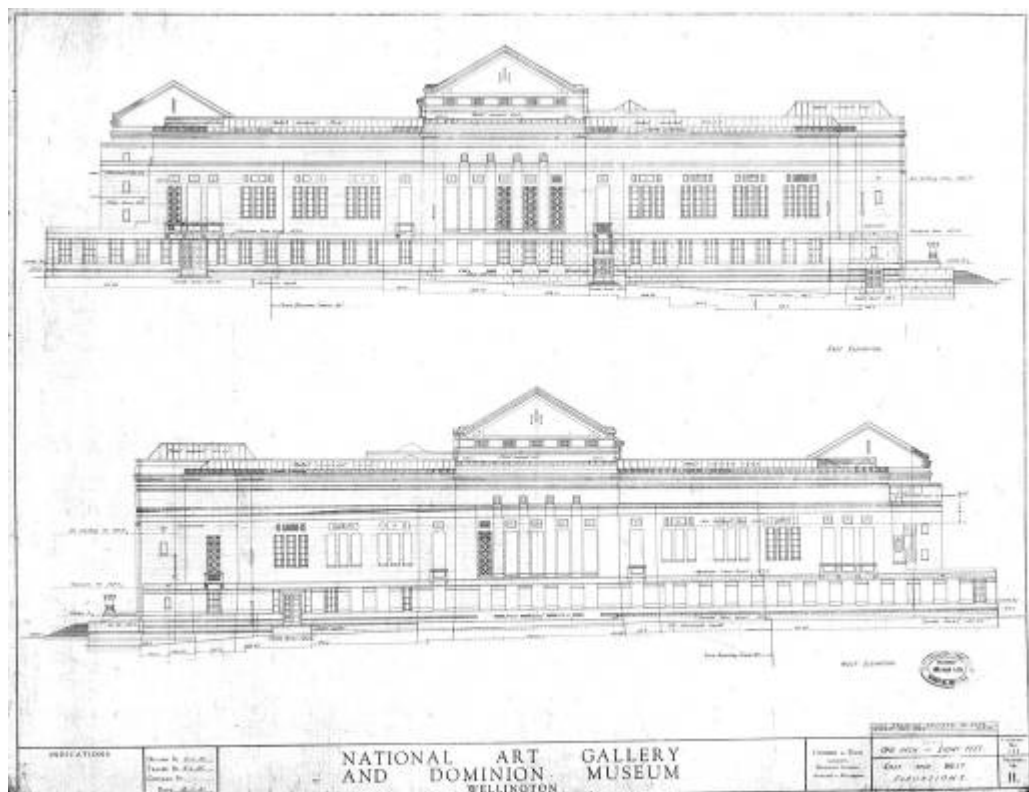


Montage of images showing the Dominion Museum under construction, Buckle Street, Wellington. Negatives of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: 1/4-015181-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22740117>



PLASTERERS AT WORK IN THE MUSEUM. — Interior finishing is in progress at the new Dominion Museum and National Art Gallery. (Evening Post, 04 July 1935). Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. <http://natlib.govt.nz/records/16817902>

1.2 Timeline of modifications



Wellington City Archive 00056: 135: B12249

1933 – 1936	Original Construction (00056: 135: B12249)
1944	Addition – Shed (00056: 292: B23274)
	Addition – Caretakers dwelling (00056: 299: B23722)
1950	Addition – Porch (00056: 379: B29163)
1963	Addition – Garage (00058: 294: C12909)
1970	Addition – Skyline Buildings garage (00058:662: C30448)
1973	Addition – Boat Shed (00058: 835: C37356)
1976	Building Alterations – Foyer and mezzanine (00058: 1057: C45967)
1981	Alterations to fish gallery (00058: 1332: C56057)
1989	Addition – Storage building added to Hector Library building at rear of museum building (00044: 5: 66)
1993	Addition – Install sculpture (00060: 31: 1213)
1993	Alterations – Museum first floor (00060: 88: 3269)
1994	Alterations – Install doors and air conditioning (00060: 148: 5414)
1999 – 2001	Building additions and alterations: restoration undertaken for Massey University

1.3 Occupation history

1936	Dominion Museum and National Art Gallery
2001	Massey University

1.4 Architect

Gummer & Ford - Architectural Partnership⁸

The architectural partnership of Gummer and Ford was established in 1923, and became one of national importance. William Henry Gummer (1884-1966) was articled to W.A. Holman, an Auckland architect, and was elected as an Associate of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1910. In the period 1908-1913 he travelled in the United Kingdom, Europe and the United States. During this time he worked for Sir Edwin Lutyens, leading English architect of the time, and for Daniel Burnham in Chicago. Burnham was a major American architect and one of the founders of the influential Chicago School of Architecture. Gummer joined the firm of Hoggard and Prouse of Auckland and Wellington in 1913. In 1914 he was elected a Fellow of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, was president of the Institute from 1933-34 and was later elected a life member.

Charles Reginald Ford (1880- 1972) was born in England and served in the Royal Navy. He was later with Captain Scott's 1901-1904 expedition to Antarctica. He trained as an architect working in Wanganui as an engineer. In 1926 he wrote the first treatise on earthquake and building construction in the English language. Ford was president of the New Zealand Institute of Architects from 1921-22. Buildings designed by the partnership include the State Insurance Building Wellington, (1940) the Dilworth Building (1926), the Guardian Trust Building and the Domain Wintergardens (1921 and 1928), all in Auckland, and the Dominion Museum (1936) in Wellington.

⁸ New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Professional Biographies, "Gummer and Ford", accessed 2/05/2013, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Gummer+&Ford>

Gummer and Ford were awarded Gold Medals from the New Zealand Institute of Architects for the designs of Auckland Railway Station and Remuera Library. Gummer was one of the most outstanding architects working in New Zealand in the first half of this century and was responsible for the stylistically and structurally advanced Tauroa (1916), Craggy Range (1919), Arden (1926), and Te Mata (1935) homesteads at Havelock North.

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture⁹

The former National Museum building is one of the two best examples of Stripped Classical architecture in New Zealand, alongside the Auckland War Memorial Museum. The building is three storeys high, and in plan and elevations retains a Classical symmetrical design. The structure has been left bare of Classical ornamentation, giving it an air of “discipline and austerity”. The main façade is centred on a massive portico supported by a colonnade of square fluted pillars, without capitals. The entablature above is faced with Putaruru stone and consists of a small architrave and frieze adorned with stone garlands and inscribed lettering: “National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum erected by the People and dedicated to the service of art and science”. Above the frieze is a dentilled cornice capped with a parapet which has eight emblematic shields in stone representing the eight branches of the arts and sciences. The interior planning follows a symmetrical Beaux Arts format.

2.2 Materials¹⁰

It was constructed in reinforced concrete and partially faced with Putaruru stone. The roof was clad with copper sheathing with glass roof-lights.

2.3 Setting

The former National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum is located on the northern slopes of Mount Cook and overlooks the National War Memorial and Carillon and Buckle Street. The Museum is relatively visible from the surrounding streets despite being surrounded by trees. The trees help to separate the Museum building from the former Mount Cook police barracks to the east and the grounds of the former Defence depot building to the west. The setting is currently being modified to form ‘Memorial Park’.

⁹ Wellington City Council. “Former National Museum of New Zealand.”

¹⁰ Ibid

3.0 Sources

McCracken, Helen. *National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum (former)*. Historic Places Trust unpublished registration report. 10 September, 2008.

New Zealand Historic Places Trust. Professional Biographies. 'Gummer and Ford.'

Accessed 02 May 2013,

[http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Gummer+ amp +Ford](http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Gummer+amp+Ford).

Wellington City Council. "Former National Museum of New Zealand." *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. Wellington City Council, 2001. BUCK7.

Online Sources – Alexander Turnbull Library

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. Evening Post, 04 July 1935<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/16817902>

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. Negatives of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: 1/4-015181-F.
<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/22740117>

Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. Negatives of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: EP-3876-1/2-G.
<http://natlib.govt.nz/records/23252624>

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?*

This building possesses outstanding architectural value; it is one of the two best examples of Stripped Classical architecture in New Zealand, alongside the Auckland War Memorial Museum. It is a significant design by the practice of Gummer and Ford who are considered to be one of the most outstanding architecture practices of the 20th century.

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 is a significant landmark that is sited on the northern slopes of Mount Cook (Puke Ahu) and is visible from many parts of the city and the hills around.

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 museum was built in conjunction with the National War Memorial and Carillon. Together the two structures lie on a formal axis that was originally planned to extend into a tree lined boulevard to Courtenay Place.

Historic Value:

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

The former National Art Gallery and Dominion Museum is a historically significant building for the role that it has played in both national and local cultural life. It is a representative of the aspirations that New Zealand held as a developing nation, particularly in the inter-war period. Its ongoing relationship with the heritage and history of New Zealand has been ensured through its new use by Massey University.

The Museum was designed by the prominent practice Gummer and Ford.

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

Scientific Value:

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

This site had both Maori and European human activity prior to 1900, this means that it is likely to have archaeological significance. It is also included in the NZAA Central City R27/270 archaeological area.

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?*

This is a large scale building constructed in reinforced concrete, so there is technical value in its construction

Social Value:

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

As the former National Museum and Art Gallery this building played a significant role in relation to New Zealand's cultural and social life. It has considerable relevance and significance as it once contained artefacts of great cultural importance to all New Zealanders.

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?*

This building has an ongoing association with the history and cultural heritage of New Zealand. As a part of a wider complex that also includes the National War Memorial and Carillon, it still has a large number of visitors.

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?*

As the former national museum, this building contributes to New Zealand's national identity. The change of name from Dominion to National is indicative of the changing status of New Zealand and the process of moving from British Colony to independent nation.

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

This building is a focus of community sentiment and connection that comes from its role as the former National Museum. There are many different cultural values that can be attributed to this building and the wider setting as it is of importance to both European and Maori New Zealanders. For Wellingtonians, this building is a landmark and a physical reminder of the history of the city.

Level of cultural heritage significance

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

This building has outstanding heritage significance due to its architectural and aesthetic quality, its historical associations, its value as a historic place and archaeological site, and the contribution that it makes to the social and cultural lives of Wellington and New Zealand.

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

This building is widely recognised as being one of two truly excellent examples of the Stripped Classical style in New Zealand (the other being the Auckland War Memorial Museum – Grierson, Aimer, and Draffin). It is a significant design that retains educational, social, and functional use values.

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 structure has retained a significant amount of its original fabric and therefore it has authenticity. It also has authenticity in materials, design, workmanship, and setting.

Local/Regional/National/International

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

This is a nationally significant building due to the role that it played in the history of New Zealand. It has an ongoing association with the history and heritage of New Zealand while also being firmly present in modern day social and cultural life. It is a representative of the aspirations of a nation and although is no longer the national museum, it continues to have relevance and significance.

4.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory		
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
WCC Records – building file		
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)		
HPT website		
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*