

## **Somerled House**

192 The Terrace



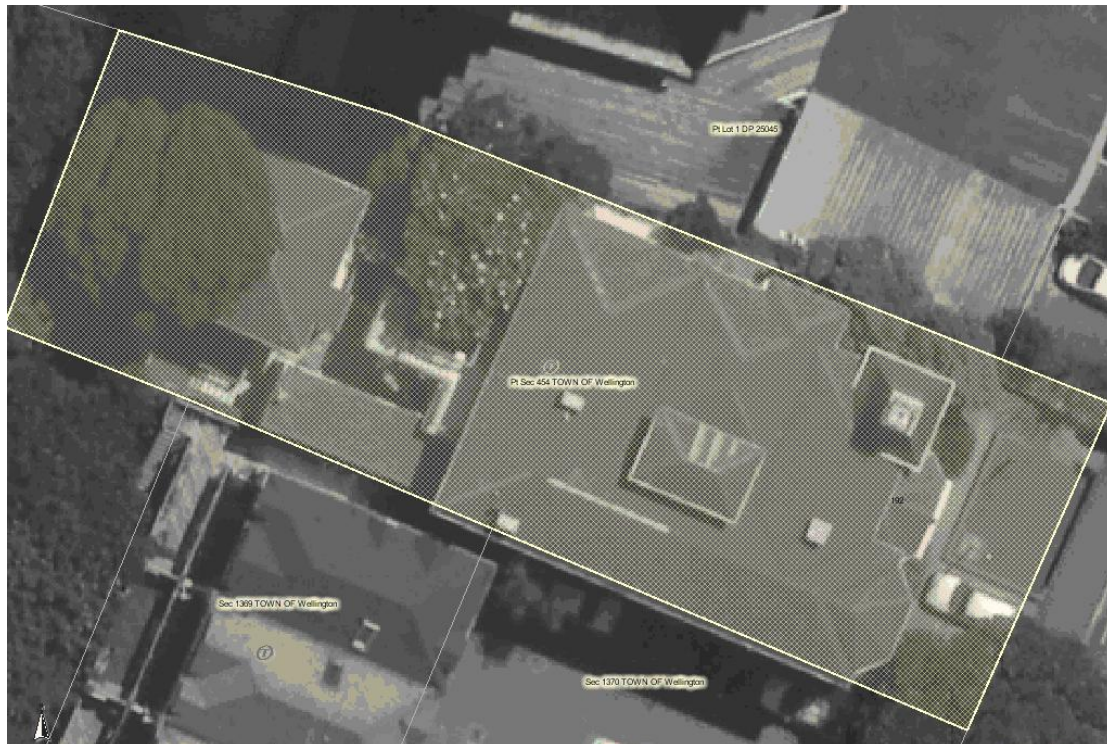
Image: *Charles Collins, 2015*

### **Summary of heritage significance**

- Somerled House has architectural value due to the retention of materials, the composition of the main façade, and the original internal features. This building is also associated with William Turnbull, prominent Wellington architect.
- This building is associated with Thomas Kennedy Macdonald and is an important part of the Terrace streetscape as an example of wooden Edwardian architecture that once typified the area.

District Plan:	Map 17, reference 294 (including fence and gates)
Legal Description:	Pt Sec 454 Town of Wellington (SO 10408)
Heritage Area:	-
HPT Listed:	NZHPT Historic Place Category II, ref 1404 (deficient registration 2013)
Archaeological Site:	Pre 1900 Building on site
Other Names:	Somerled House, Macdonald House
Key physical dates:	Original c.1880s, additions 1902
Architect / Builder:	Architect: William Turnbull
Former uses:	Residential, commercial
Current uses:	Residential
Earthquake Prone Status:	Building Strength Inventory status 'Not Earthquake Prone'. SR 161447

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



---

## 1.0 Outline History

### 1.1 History

Somerled House located at 192 The Terrace (formerly 104 Wellington Terrace), was constructed in 1902 for Thomas Kennedy Macdonald by well known architect William Turnbull.

In 1892 the site was purchased by Thomas Kennedy Macdonald from Frances Mary Izard.<sup>1</sup> The site at this time already contained one small house, believed to have been constructed during the 1860s.<sup>2</sup> Somerled house is the result of a number of large additions being made to this small house, which has now been amalgamated as a part of the rear of the building.<sup>3</sup> In 1902 Macdonald, a local businessman, political figure, and land agent, commissioned well known architect William Turnbull to design a large, timber framed, weatherboard residence. Turnbull designed the new building to incorporate the building already on the site, in a Late Victorian/Edwardian Italianate style. The building became known as Macdonald House or Somerled House.

Somerled House remained the residence of the Macdonald family until 1914, when Macdonald died and left the house to his wife. She sold the house in 1920 to Lucia Mills, and since this time the house has had a number of different owners.<sup>4</sup> Its main use has remained that of a family home, however, it did function as a boarding hostel during the 1970s. In August of 1976 the owner and proprietor of the boarding hostel, Ruby Turner, put the property up for auction. It was purchased by Mr T.V.W. Martin of Viceroy Antiques Ltd. Mr Martin undertook a considerable project upgrading and restoring the house. Mr Martin had intended to open an antiques shop on the ground floor of the building; unfortunately he failed to obtain Wellington City Council planning permission for car-parks.<sup>5</sup>

The house was then sold to B.A. Wilson of Olpherts Barristers and Solicitors in 1980. The ground floor of the building was then used as the offices for the firm while the upstairs retained some residential use. Somerled House operated as law offices until 1995 when it was put up for auction. After failing to sell, it was later purchased by the Tainui Maori Trust Board. The Tainui board carried out alterations to Somerled House, converting it back into residences for visiting Tainui.<sup>6</sup> The building was visited in 1998 as part of the WCC Heritage Building Interiors Project when it was noted that the building interior was in near-original condition (with some sympathetic modernisation).<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> NZHPT Buildings Record Form, HP FILE No. 12013-504.

<sup>2</sup> Wellington City Council, "192 the Terrace," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), TERR6

<sup>3</sup> '4.2.History of the site and building'. Mark Riddell, unpublished conservation plan, 1999.

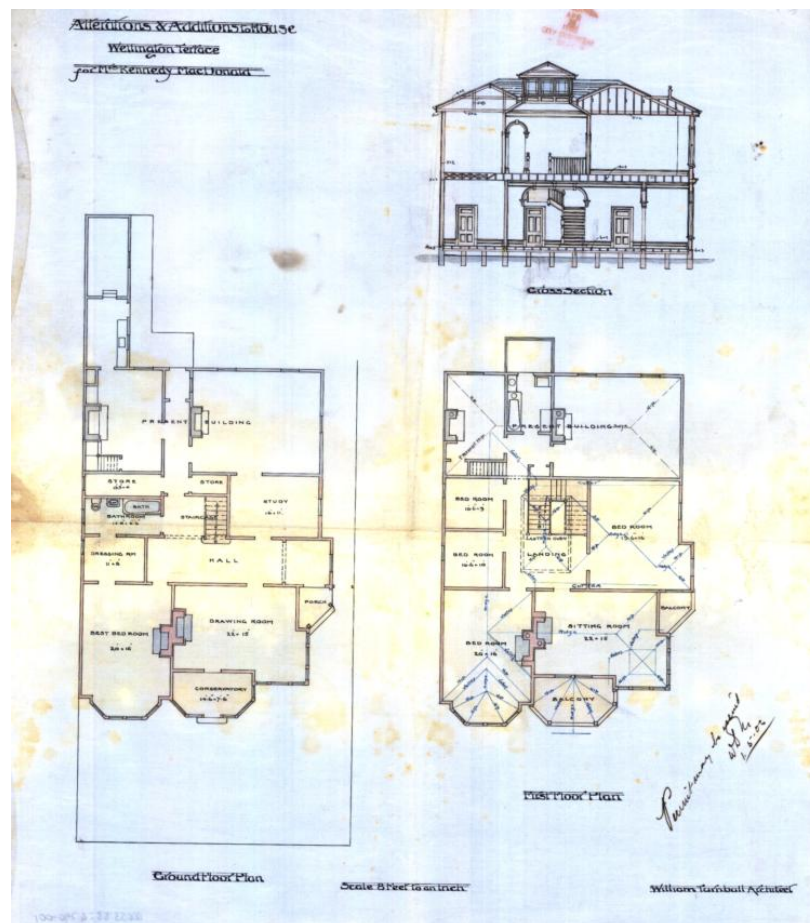
<sup>4</sup> Land Title Service, Certificate of Title 351/79.

<sup>5</sup> '4.2.History of the site and building'. Mark Riddell, unpublished conservation plan, 1999.

<sup>6</sup> "Heritage Building-192 The Terrace". 1998. 1041-06-TER192, Wellington City Council Records.

<sup>7</sup> Sandra Smillie, 'Heritage Building Interiors Project Interior Survey: Somerled House' unpublished survey notes from the Heritage Interiors Project 1998

## 1.2 Timeline of modifications



Plans for Additions and alterations – WCA 00053: 83: 4790: 001

- 1902 Building construction (00053:83:4790)
- 1932 Reinstatement following fire (00056:127:B11541)
- 1964 Addition-Carport (00058:257:C11423)
- 1976 Reinstatement-repiling (00058:1070:C46461)
- 1976-79 Alteration and additions- Renovations, installation of stained glass windows, re-plastering of ceilings, repainting of exterior, installation of new kitchen, addition of swimming pool and sauna
- 1980 Alterations-Residential/commercial resource consent, reinstatement of wrought iron fence, landscaping
- 1995 Alterations-conversion into residential apartments, ensuite added, access ways added.
- 2006 Dwelling additions and alterations amounting to \$49,000. (00078:2065:141802)

### 1.3 Occupation history

1902	T.K. Macdonald and family
1920	Lucia Mills
1930	John Hamilton Miles
1944	Marjorie Annie McIntyre
1952	Howard Neville Robinson
1960	Ruby Turner-proprietor of boarding house, numerous tenants
1976	Vic Martin-Viceroy Antiques
1980	B.A. Wilson-Offices of Olpherts Barristers and Solicitors
1995	Tainui Maori Trust Board-Variou Tenants

### 1.4 Architect

#### William Turnbull.

William Turnbull (1868-1941) entered the architectural office of his father Thomas (1825-1907) in 1882, and received his professional education from him. In 1890, William visited Melbourne and Sydney and was engaged in the office of J. A. Gordon, a Melbourne architect who at that time was engaged in the design of several major commercial buildings including the Melbourne (now Victoria) Markets. In 1891 William returned to Wellington and was admitted into partnership in the firm of Thomas Turnbull and Son. This was one of the foremost architectural practices in the city at the turn of the century and it continued after Thomas Turnbull's death in 1907. William became a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1906, designing many important early twentieth century buildings in Wellington such as 12 Boulcott Street (1902), Turnbull House (1918), and the Wellington Free Ambulance Building (1932). The range and variety of his adaptation of architectural styles show him to be fully versed in virtually every contemporary architectural style and to have special skills and flair for masonry design.<sup>8</sup>

## 2.0 Physical description

### 2.1 Architecture

William Turnbull designed Somerled House in 1902 in the popular style of the time, late Victorian/Edwardian with Italianate features. It was built as a large extension to an earlier house, parts of which may date from as early as c.1860.

The façade is marked by a protruding bay, porch, balcony, and a square turret. The house features on the far right side a square tower with steep (gothic styled) turret with crows nest and wrought iron work at the top. The turret is one of the most significant features, with elongated windows, string courses, half-timbered frieze and hipped roof. The centre is made up of an entrance/conservatory and a first floor balcony. The balcony features balustrading and turned, moulded, and tapered columns with a sunburst decorated pediment and finial.<sup>9</sup> The left side of the building has a protruding hexagonal bay window that is featured on both the ground and second floor.

<sup>8</sup> Historic Places Trust, "William Turnbull", *Professional Biographies*, accessed September 28, 2012. [http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Turnbull,+William+\(1868-1941\)](http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Turnbull,+William+(1868-1941))

<sup>9</sup> Wellington City Council, "192 The Terrace".

The interior of Somerled House retains authenticity with many features remaining. The house features a Kauri staircase, along with kauri doors, arches, fire surrounds, and other features. A major feature is a domed ceiling with a stained glass lantern in the central hall.<sup>10</sup>

## **2.2 Materials**

Somerled House is a timber framed structure with an exterior cladding consisting of rusticated timber weatherboards. The roof is constructed of corrugated iron, with wrought iron finishing's on the roof, front fence, and gates. Stained glass windows are a feature of the façade. The interior is finished in kauri with brass fixtures and fittings.

## **2.3 Setting**

Somerled House is an important feature of the Terrace streetscape. The building adds character to the street as a good example of the, now diminishing, stock of timber residences that were built for upper middle-class Victorian and Edwardian Wellington. These include Carrigafoyle 1903 (17/295), and houses at 214, 221, 230, 244, 258 and 274 The Terrace that date from the 1890s to the early 1900s and are also listed on the WCC Heritage Inventory.

Somerled house, in conjunction with the other timber houses on the Terrace, helps to mark the Terrace as a centre of life for the elite at the turn of the century. It also helps to demarcate the residential southern end of the Terrace from the commercial northern end.

## **3.0 Sources**

Alington, Margaret. 'Macdonald, Thomas Kennedy - Biography', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 1-Sep-10. Accessed 28 September 2012  
<http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2m4/1>

New Zealand Historic Places Trust Buildings Record Form, HP FILE NO. 12013-504.

Riddell, Mark. '*Somerled House 192 The Terrace-Conservation Plan*' Unpublished, 12.10.1999.

### **Wellington City Archives**

00053: 83: 4790: 001

### **WCC Records**

"Heritage Building-192 The Terrace". 1998. 1041-06-TER192, Wellington City Council Records.

### **HPT Architect Biographies**

Historic Places Trust, "William Turnbull", *Professional Biographies*, accessed September 28, 2012.

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

[http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Turnbull,+William+\(1868-1941\)](http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Turnbull,+William+(1868-1941))

### **Newspapers**

'Wellington Harbour Board'. *Colonist*. Volume XLIX, Issue 11871, 27 February 1907.

'New Zealand Politics'. *Wairarapa Daily Times*. Volume XXVII, Issue 7492, 23 June 1903.

## 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?*

Somerled House is a good representative example of a grand Victorian House built for the wealthy elite. It is notable for the composition of its main façade, for its ornate scheme of Classical timber ornamentation.

**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?*

Somerled House, with its distinctive corner tower, and ornate scheme of Classical timber ornamentation, is a local landmark on The Terrace and makes a major contribution to the streetscape.

**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?*

Somerled House is one of a group of large timber houses of the wealthy elite that were built on The Terrace from the 1890s to the early 1900s.

#### **Historic Value:**

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

This building is associated with Thomas Kennedy Macdonald, a wealthy local businessman, politician and land agent. This building is also associated with William Turnbull, prominent Wellington architect.

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

This building is representative of the wealth and prosperity that characterised this area of Wellington at the turn of the century.

#### **Scientific Value:**

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

There is evidence of a pre 1900 building and pre 1900 human activity on the site so is protected under the HPA (1993).

**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 building has some technical value due to the retention of the exterior façade and some internal features. It can provide insight into the ways that materials were used and the construction techniques that were employed in the construction of a large wooden house in the Edwardian period.

**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?*

The building has had few intrusive modern alterations or additions over the past 100 years and contributes to the sense of place and continuity of the streetscape of The Terrace.

**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?*

This building is a representative of the wealth and prosperity of the area its owners, and the architectural style and talent of William Turnbull. It is a good representative of buildings from the Edwardian period in its style and scale.

**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?*

This building has authenticity in the retention of its exterior façade and internal features.

**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 important at a local/regional level due to its associations with well known Wellingtonians, the authenticity of its façade, and the contribution that it makes to the Terrace streetscape.

## 4.0 Appendix

### Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory	T	
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	T	
WCC Records – building file	T	
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)	N	
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	N	
Plan change?	N	
Heritage Area Report	N	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	N	
Heritage items folder (electronic)	Y	
HPT website	N	
HPT files	Y	
Conservation Plan	Y	Prepared by student-Victoria University
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	

### Background research

#### Thomas Kennedy Macdonald.

Thomas Macdonald (later known as Thomas Kennedy Macdonald) arrived in Wellington from Australia in July 1871. He originally worked as an accountant and later established his own company dealing with land, estate, and general agencies, share broking, auctioneering, and commission agencies. Macdonald's expertise in land matters led to his appointment in the 1880s as an auctioneer, auditor, and umpire to the Wellington and Manawatu Railway Company. Following the Government Advances to settlers act in 1894 he became the valuer for lands from 1895-1901. Macdonald was a strong protectionist, and played a large role in the New Zealand Industrial Protection Association and aided the development of local industries and businesses. Macdonald was a member of Wellington City Council in 1877 and 1878, and for a time was senior city auditor. He was a president of the Wellington Chamber of Commerce in 1884 and a chairman of the Wellington Harbour Board from 1906-07.<sup>11</sup>

A political liberal, Kennedy Macdonald was MHR for City of Wellington from 1890-1891. He was valued particularly for his knowledge of the laws affecting land and he was a member of the royal commissions on the Public Trust Office in 1891. His retirement from the house was forced by a bankruptcy claim, and although it was discharged, he was not re-elected in 1893. In 1903 he was elected by R. J. Seddon to the Legislative Council where he worked until his retirement in 1911.<sup>12</sup> On 29 November 1913 Kennedy Macdonald was admitted to Porirua Mental Hospital where he died in 1914 of 'Chronic Brain Disease'.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> 'Wellington Harbour Board'. *Colonist*. Volume XLIX, Issue 11871, 27 February 1907, 4.

<sup>12</sup> 'New Zealand Politics'. *Wairarapa Daily Times*. Volume XXVII, Issue 7492, 23 June 1903, 3.

<sup>13</sup> Margaret Alington. 'Macdonald, Thomas Kennedy - Biography', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 1-Sep-10  
<http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2m4/1>