

WAIMAKARIRI DISTRICT COUNCIL
HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

2021 District Plan Item No. HH102

HERITAGE ITEM NAME former Oxford Post & Telegraph Office and postmaster's residence

ADDRESS 35 Main Street, Oxford

PHOTOGRAPH



(Dr A McEwan, 10 July 2019)

DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. n / a **HNZ LIST NO. & CATEGORY** n / a
(at time of assessment)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Section 1 SO 17949

VALUATION NUMBER 2153201601

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION 1914

**ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/
BUILDER** Public Works Department, architects; John Forbes,
contractor

STYLE Transitional bungalow

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Single-storey building with L-shaped footprint and hipped roof forms. Principal, north-facing elevation is largely symmetrical about a recessed entry with cross-gabled porch carried on decorative brackets. Double-hung sash windows with multi-pane uppers are single, paired or tripled; aprons beneath windows flanking entry. Exposed rafters, concrete steps and ramp. Lean-to at rear. Signboard over entrance porch.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Timber framing and weatherboard cladding, corrugated metal roofing.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

West addition (late 1940s/early 1950s).

SETTING

The building stands on the south side of Main Street, east of its intersection with Redwood Place and west of the intersection with Burnett Street. The former post office is close to the road boundary and is set within a cluster of civic and commercial buildings. The Oxford Library and Oxford Town Hall are on the opposite side of the street. The extent of scheduling is the land parcel on which the building is located.

HISTORY

Postal services in Oxford commenced in c.1860 and were subsequently provided at both the Oxford East and West railway stations. Following some controversy as to its location, a new, centrally located and purpose-built post and telegraph office was erected in the second half of 1914. The new post office opened on 8 December 1914; the site was reported to have been given by John Ingram. The property was subdivided in 1988 with a new telephone exchange occupying the rear of the site. In c.1991 the post office was closed; the building is now in private ownership.

HISTORICAL AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Oxford Post Office has historical and social significance for its association with the 20th century development of Oxford. Typically, a residence for the postmaster was provided in 19th and early 20th century post offices, as was the case in Oxford. The building provided a variety of postal and telegraphic services and represents the contribution made by central government to life of a North Canterbury town.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Oxford Post Office has cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of the postal workers who staffed, and resided in, the building through the greater part of the 20th century.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The former Oxford Post Office has architectural significance as an example of inter-war government architecture showing the emerging influence of the California Bungalow style. As Government Architect, John Campbell was ultimately responsible for the design of the building, which combines a vestigial classical composition with the less formal California Bungalow style.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The former Oxford Post Office has technological and craftsmanship value for the evidence it provides of inter-war building materials and methods. John Forbes was a Cust builder.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Oxford Post Office has contextual significance for the contribution it makes to the historic character of its Main Street setting and the visual evidence it provides of the early 20th century commercial and civic development of central Oxford. It stands immediately to the east of the Oxford Centennial Memorial building and opposite the Oxford Town Hall and Oxford Library and WDC Service Centre.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the former Oxford Post Office post-dates 1900 its site may have limited archaeological values.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

The former Oxford Post & Telegraph Office and postmaster's residence has overall significance to Oxford and the Waimakariri district as a whole. The building has historical and social significance as a former post office and postmaster's residence and cultural value as a demonstration of the way of life of those who worked and lived in the building during most of the 20th century. The former Oxford Post Office has architectural significance as a transitional California bungalow style design by the Public Works Department and technological and craftsmanship value for its interwar construction methods and materials. The former Oxford

Post Office has contextual significance for the contribution it makes to the historic character of Main Street in central Oxford. Its site may have limited archaeological values in view of the age of the building.

HERITAGE CATEGORY

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REFERENCES

- *Press* 12 October 1876, p. 2; 28 May 1914, p. 10; 11 June 1914, p. 2; 8 December 1914, p. 4; 21 August 1926, p. 21; 3 October 1936, p. 4.
- *Sun* 4 September 1914, p. 9.
- *Lyttelton Times* 21 December 1912, p. 17; 26 December 1912, p. 8; 31 December 1912, p. 8; 15 March 1913, p. 12; 29 March 1916, p. 8.
- *North Canterbury Gazette* 6 September 1935, p. 4; 8 June 1937, p. 3; 10 August 1937, p. 3; 23 November 1939, p. 1.
- Archives New Zealand.
- <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc03Cycl-t1-body1-d4-d17-d1.html>
- DN Hawkins *Beyond the Waimakariri* Christchurch, 2001.
- P Richardson 'An Architecture of Empire: The Government Buildings of John Campbell in New Zealand' MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 1988; available online.

REPORT COMPLETED

20 July 2019

AUTHOR

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Extent of scheduling, former Oxford Post Office, 35 Main Street Oxford.