



Eltham Historical Society Building (WestpacTrust Building), 71 Bridge Street 1911

Use	Eltham Historic Society Rooms	Historic Value	3 out of 5
Materials	Brick and plaster, corrugated iron roof	Architectural Value	3 out of 4
NZHPT Registered	Category II Register Number 834	Technical Value	1 out of 2
Valuation No	12200-388-00	Symbolic Value	1 out of 3
Legal Description	Pt Lot 7 DP 1113 Eltham Village	Rarity	- out of 2
		Townscape Value	2 out of 2
		Group Value	1 out of 2
		Overall Cultural Heritage Value	11 out of 20
Reference	Br10		

Description

The Westpac Trust is a single storey building with facades on both Bridge and York Streets. The main entrance is on the corner of both these streets.

History

The Westpac Trust building was built on the corner of Bridge and York Streets. The agency was first opened in 1887, being visited twice weekly by an officer from the Hawera bank. The bank occupied various premises until 1905 when a section was purchased on the corner of Bridge and York Streets.

The Eltham Argus dated 1 October 1910 recorded calls for tenders to erect a new bank, and the building progress was described as follows:

"Building Progress Operations in Eltham"

"The erection of new buildings in Eltham goes on apace and to use a popular phrase, the Town keeps going ahead".

"In previous articles, various new buildings were described, but the concrete mixer, the bricklayer, the plasterer, the carpenter, the plumber and the painter are kept busy. Foremost in this direction may be mentioned the two new Banks – the Bank of New South Wales, previously described in these columns, opened and the Bank of Australasia, in which business is now being carried on." (Eltham Argus, 30 September 1911)

During 1915 a client advised the manager (Mr W D Ross) that two men had tunnelled under the next door billiard saloon towards the bank strong-room. Mr Ross lifted a trap door in the floor and was amazed to find that the tunnel was under the bank's strong-room. The Police were advised and found that the tunnel originated from a concealed trap door on a vacant section, large enough for a grown man to crawl through. It contained tools ready for the break-in through the strong-room's concrete floor. The culprits had also entered Wilkinson's store and a considerable quantity of goods were found in the tunnel.

The two men involved recognised detectives sent out from Wanganui and postponed their attempt on the strong room. Goods from Wilkinson's store were found at one of their residences though and they were arrested. They were subsequently sentenced to two years hard labour. They admitted spending eighteen months building the tunnel which was put on show to people wishing to pay a 1/- donation to the patriotic fund.

Architect

Architects Crichton and McKay FFRIBA, Lambton Quay, Wellington

Builder

Not known.

Sources

Don Drabble. Roma Jenkins, Eltham Historical Society
Eltham Argus, 30 September 1911, 1 October 1910
Encyclopaedia of New Zealand (1908)

Date

January 2000