



Caplen Building, 79 Princes Street

1882

Use	Offices and Gallery	Historic Value	4 out of 5
Materials	Plastered masonry, timber floors, corrugated iron roof	Architectural Value	3 out of 4
NZHPT Registered	Category II Register Number 837	Technical Value	1 out of 2
Valuation No	12340-379-00	Symbolic Value	1 out of 3
Legal Description	Pt Lot 69 DP 9	Rarity	1 out of 2
		Townscape Value	1 out of 2
		Group Value	2 out of 2
		Overall Cultural Heritage Value	13 out of 20
Map Reference	PW6		

Description

The Caplen Building is a two storey plastered masonry building, built principally as lawyers offices. It is a strong classical design, with a ground floor shop on either side of a central portico that contains the door to the first floor. The portico is framed by pilasters with Corinthian capitals and a triangular pediment; the pilasters are repeated at the extremities, with paired ones above. The windows on the first floor are round-headed with keystones, and above is a cornice with dentils and a parapet, the central part of which has a broken tympanum. The design is relatively unchanged from the original, with masonry balls missing from the parapet; all the joinery is intact. An iron spiral staircase which used to link offices on the left hand side of the building has been removed, and in 1989 internal alterations were made by Clive Cullen to create space on the first floor for his offices and an art gallery.

History

This building was constructed in 1882 by a well known Hawera builder, Mr E A Pacey, for Mr Harry Caplen, a lawyer who was admitted to the bar in 1882 after working as an underwriter, goldminer and farmer. His building was the first in Hawera to be constructed of brick, the bricklayer being Mr Whittington, and the joinery was supplied by the Hawera Sash and Door Co. The initial occupants of the building included Mr H Caplen; Budge and Smith, estate agents, and R D Welsh, a solicitor in practice for many years. Other occupants have included the National Bank of New Zealand; a legal firm L A Taylor, and an accounting firm, Henderson and Parker. It is suggested that this building saved the small wooden building next to it from destruction during the 1895 fire, because of its concrete construction.

Architect

C J Brodick; 1988/89 refurbishment, Clive Cullen, Hawera

Builder

E A Pacey, Hawera

Statement of Significance

The Caplen building has strong historical value for several reasons: it is possibly the first major brick building in the town; it was commissioned and used by an important early lawyer and borough councillor Harry Caplen, and it has seen a number of other tenants to the present day, professional and commercial, who have contributed to the life of the town. It is a competent and impressive piece of neo-classical design, designed to enhance the standing of its first owner, and it remains in authentic condition with little change over time. It forms part of a row of period buildings on the west side of Princes Street that - for its consistency, scale, decoration and style - is unsurpassed in Taranaki and which has national historical importance.

Sources

South Taranaki District Council Building File No. 12340-380-00
Hawera Historic Tour Booklet (1973), Historical Circle of the Hawera Women's Club
Hawera Star, 7 April 1989; *Hawera Morning Post*, 31 December 1896
Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, 1906; conversation with owner, Clive Cullen

Date

June 1997