



Mayfair Theatre, 67 Devon Street West
1916/1937

Themes in development: cultural and social.

Cultural heritage values: historical, architectural, technical, townscape and group values.

Registered: Category II under the Historic Places Act, 1993.

Category III on the New Plymouth District Planning Scheme.

Owner

Mayfair New Plymouth Ltd
PO Box 18
New Plymouth

Title

Pt Sec 666 DP 964 DP3418
Lots 1-3, 6, 7 DP 7582 -
Mayfair Cinema
ID: 015156

Use

Retail and theatre

Description

The Mayfair Theatre is a two-storied reinforced concrete building on a central Devon Street West site. The concrete is finished in coloured cement render patterned very convincingly to look like sandstone. It is art deco in style with restrained geometric motifs decorating window heads and parapet. The entrance to the theatre is offset from the centre of the building, and is emphasised by an arched opening in the verandah fascia and a prominent cluster of tall fluted columns piercing the parapet above. The theatre entrance has highly ornate art deco plasterwork.

History

The Mayfair Theatre began life as Everybody's Picture Theatre. A building permit was issued on 8 February 1916, and it was built by Mr Sidney Chappell in partnership with Mr Woolley for the sum of (5,283 pounds); the design of the theatre was by the Auckland architects Grierson and Aimer in 1916, and T H Bates supervised the construction. The owners were Taranaki Amusements Ltd. Among the directors, and also general manager, was Garnet Saunders (1880 - 1943), a pioneer of the cinema in Taranaki: his son known as Zig Saunders was later chairman of directors of the company. The first screening in Everybody's was "Temptation" on 15 December 1916, and the first regular talking pictures in New Plymouth began here with the screening of "Show Boat" on 7 September 1929.

The present building that faces the street contains an entrance to the theatre, shops on the ground floor and hall above, and was an addition to the theatre in 1937/38; this work was designed by T H Bates and built by Boon Bros Ltd. It was renamed the Mayfair Theatre on 29 July 1938, and it continued in use as a theatre until the screening on 19 November 1993 of "Indecent Proposal".

Alterations to the shops on the ground floor have been made on eight occasions between 1953 and 1984. Some of the shops are tenanted at present, with the theatre awaiting a new use.

Architect

The architect were Grierson and Aimer, Auckland, and T H Bates.

Statement of Significance

The Mayfair Theatre is a very good example of art deco design of the 1930s, designed by an important local architect T H Bates. Its architectural and townscape value is high and is enhanced by the colour and pattern of the original cement render that is still unpainted on the main facade. The theatre has social and historical significance in being a place of entertainment in the city over some 80 years.