



Municipal Buildings & Hall of Remembrance

Broadway, Stratford

1916

Use: Commercial
Materials: Timber, concrete
NZHPT Registered: Historic Places Category II
Legal Description: Lot1 DP16599 - Subj to & Int in R/W

Historic Value: 5 out of 5
Architectural Value: 3 out of 4
Technical Value: 1 out of 2
Symbolic Value: 3 out of 3

Rarity Value: 1 out of 2
Townscape Value: 1 out of 2
Group Value: 2 out of 2

Overall Heritage Value: 16 out of 20



By the early 1880s, it was considered that the town of Stratford had grown sufficiently in importance to require a Town Hall. This was subsequently erected in 1884 and in July of that year it was used by Major Atkinson for the delivery of his election speech. The official opening did not occur until August, and was celebrated with the holding of a ball. Not long afterwards, church services were also held in the hall. This was where the Town Board used to meet and where all their records were stored. Unfortunately, on 8 January 1886 a large bush fire swept through, completely razing the Town Hall and many other buildings, and consequently all of the Board's records were lost.



In 1900, the Municipal Buildings were built on the original Town Hall Site. Original photos show that the top floor contained a Reading Room, a small Circulating Library and the Borough Council Chambers. Sadly, this building was burnt down on the 23rd of October 1914. For a time the site was left empty. The Council met at the Fire Brigade whilst they had no premises and there was talk of building an Opera House or other such structure where the Municipal Buildings were. Eventually though, it was decided that another Municipal Building would be built on the site, to replace the old one. So in 1916, the new building was built, and this is what remains today.

Perhaps the most remarkable part of the entire building is the Hall of Remembrance, which is Stratford's War Memorial. As a form of Roll of Honour it is quite unique, as it includes photos of all the soldiers. This corridor doubles as the entry hall from Broadway to the upstairs of the Municipal Buildings.

On May 3rd 1920, the Hall was officially opened by His Royal Highness Edward, Prince of Wales. At this stage, both sides of the Hall were lined with the photos as it was intended to be a quasi-memorial.

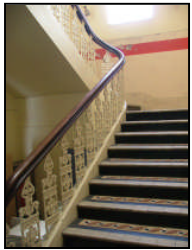
After the culmination of the Second World War, it was decided that the Hall of Remembrance would be altered slightly to incorporate the memorial to those who had fought in World War Two. As a result, the part dedicated to the soldiers from the First World War was moved to fully cover the southern wall and the fifty five photographs of fallen WWII soldiers were displayed on the northern side. This addition was not unveiled until Anzac Day 1951, by His Worship the Mayor N.H. Moss Esq.



*Left: World War One Photos
Right: World War Two Photos*



Originally the downstairs part of the building was used for Mayor and Council employees' offices (including the town clerk and engineers). Also, this is where the original Council Chambers were. Now, the Stratford Campus of WITT (Western Institute of Technology at Taranaki) is housed in the whole downstairs level of the building. Extensive alterations have consequently been completed.



Upstairs, to the left from the stair-well, there was the Reading Room. This was a large room with long Kauri tables in it. Sloping stands were extended along the walls of the room, holding the papers. It was here that members of the public could come to read the nation's news. There was an arrangement for newspapers from around the country to be sent there so they were accessible to the public. Sometimes newspapers would take a couple of days to arrive but this did nothing to decrease their popularity. This room is now used by SeniorNet, a program aimed at teaching Senior Citizens about internet use.

To the right of the stair well was the Council Chambers, however these were only moved up there, during the time of George Boon's mayoralty (*pictured on the right in their current state*). Before the Chambers were moved, this was the site of a Museum where glass cases and stands held memorabilia. These items were transferred to the Taranaki Museum when renovations went underway for the placement of the Chambers. This meant that the original chambers, downstairs, could be changed into a meeting room.



The large room beyond the Chambers was originally the Tea Rooms. The décor is still reminiscent of such a purpose, with ornate ceilings and square structural pillars incorporated into the interior scheme. A room to the south of the upstairs portion was a kitchen, allowing for a large stove. The 'Tea Rooms' was eventually renovated for the library to move there.

Now, the large back rooms are all empty as the library has moved to its current site on Prospero Place. The Municipal Building can be hired out and is used regularly by the Stratford Mountain Singers as a base and for rehearsals. The current Council Buildings, also on Miranda Street, were opened in 1981 for the County Council. It was not until 1989 that the Borough and County Councils amalgamated, and the Borough Council thus moved from the Municipal Chambers to Miranda Street.

This building is one of the most beautifully-kept historic buildings in Stratford.



Bibliography

Stratford District Centenary: 1878-1978
Stratford Jubilee: 1928