



WHANGANUI DISTRICT HERITAGE INVENTORY

Register Item No: 421 **Type:** Building **Site:** Pre-1900 Archaeological Interest

Name: DUIGAN'S BUILDINGS

Location: 23 Ridgway Street, Whanganui

Legal Description: Originally pt Sections 82 & 83 Town of Wanganui, now Lot 1, DP 34119

Current Details: Owner: [Contact Whanganui District Council for details]

Occupier: Meteor Printers

Original Owner: CL Duigan (in partnership with Mr Shields)

Date: 1902

Architect/Designer: Andrew McFarlane

Builder: J Sims

Status: District Plan Class: B, in Old Town Conservation Overlay Zone

Thematic Context: Industry/Commerce & Civic

Significance: Architectural, Historic, Context

Integrity: Substantially intact; some new partitions inside but otherwise few changes

Photo Reference:

WDC File Ref: Heritage/Inventory/B4-11 2009a

Date: March 2009

See pp 4&5 for additional photographs



This 1902 building erected for Charles Duigan was once the office for Waitotara County Council and has housed printers since the 1930s.



History:

Of the site:

This land was also occupied by Thomas Reid and later had Drummond & Alexander's warehouses and bond store on the site. A billiard room was built c1899 on part of Section 83, which was still owned by the Reids.

Waitotara County Council was established in 1884 and its first clerk and treasurer, Herbert Dymock, took up offices in Ridgway Street in a building opposite the Public Library in April 1884. It was in these offices that the Council had its first meeting on 7 April 1884 and probably remained there until 1902 when Dymock moved the Council offices into the new building further down the same block of Ridgway Street.

Of the building:

This was constructed for Charles L Duigan, an estate agent and auctioneer, as business premises for use by himself as well as Waitotara County Council and other organisations. Andrew McFarlane designed the building, his tender notice being published on 12 October 1901 for new premises for CL Duigan in Ridgway Street. This was the same date the building permit was issued by the Borough Council for CL Duigan's new building of shops and offices, with brick walls. Further information about the building was published in the *Wanganui Herald* on 8 April 1902 when it was completed. The newspaper commented that it was "one of the most valuable additions to the superior class of buildings now taking the place of the old wooden premises in Wanganui". The report names the architect, Andrew McFarlane, and builder, Mr J Sims and commented that the premises would in future be known as "Duigan's Buildings", a name which appeared to stay with it for some time after Duigan had actually ceased to occupy offices there.

The newspaper reported that there were three separate suites of offices on the ground floor, being occupied by Waitotara County Council, the Hospital and Charitable Aid Boards and CL Duigan and his staff. Each of these offices had commodious board rooms at the rear. "A handsome and substantial stairway leads to the upper storey, divided into two parts" noted the reporter, with a large and lofty room 52ft by 44ft to be used as an auction room. Three roomy offices adjoined this, but were not yet occupied. Strong room accommodation was provided to encourage solicitors to take space in the building.

Duigan did attract two solicitors to take space in the building; Jas Watt moved here temporarily in 1902 and CH Borlase in 1903. However, apart from the two key tenants, Waitotara County Council and the Hospital Board, it appears that other tenants may not have been attracted to the building. In 1907, Duigan decided to build new premises for himself on the other side of Ridgway Street and closer to Victoria Avenue (see B17.8, 40 Ridgway Street). He announced that his offices were to let and would suit a solicitor, having a strong room. However, Duigan continued to own the building with Mr Shields, until the early 1920s at least.

By 1911, David Craig, the District Valuer, and Samuel Dalrymple, Inspector of Machinery, were tenants in the building together with the County Council and Hospital Boards, as well as Dymock & Co which had, by now, become a firm of accountants. The Hospital Board moved out when they built new premises in Campbell Street in 1915 and their offices appear to have been taken by the NZ State Coal Department.

By 1914, Henry Goodwin, a printer and bookbinder, was occupying premises in this part of Ridgway Street, but probably in the Bon Accord Chambers next door. This is the first instance of a firm of printers occupying these buildings. Goodwin is not mentioned in the 1929 Wise's Directory, but is listed in 1941 Wise's as occupying space next to David McFarlane's hardware store (Bon Accord Chambers). The Wanganui Printing Company is, however, listed in 1941 Wise's at 138 Ridgway Street, next to Waitotara County Council (the street having been renumbered in the 1930s). [No. 138 Ridgway Street is not a separate building, but indicates a separate entrance to that part of Duigan's building occupied by the printers, as Meteor are listed at No. 138 in the 1959/60 Wise's Directory.]

Of Meteor Printers:

In 1946, Brian Edinger and his father purchased the Wanganui Printing Company from Walter Willis. Noel Ruscoe joined the firm having served his printing apprenticeship with Wanganui Newspapers, and later formed a company with Ian Duncan, registering it as Meteor Printers in 1949. The firm expanded further when Waitotara County Council moved to Victoria Avenue in 1953, and in 1962 Noel Ruscoe bought out the company. In 1972, Meteor expanded into the Bon Accord Chambers and opened their retail stationery shop. Further expansion took place in 1988 when Meteor took on the old McFarlane's hardware store, giving them more retail space for stationery and other office products. Today Meteor is run by Noel Ruscoe's son, Warren, and provides graphic design services as well as printing and stationery and office supplies.

Recorded work on the building appears to be minimal. Waitotara County Council put in office partitions in 1947 and a storeroom in 1951, both likely to have been on the ground floor. Meteor Printers installed a roller shutter door on the front in 1968 and built a lean-to in 1980, but other work would have been minor and not requiring building consent. At some time, concrete pads were installed on the ground floor to take the weight of printing presses. Part of the first floor was once used as a flat for a Meteor employee.

Description:

A two-storey building with brick side walls and timber front and back elevations, with a corrugated iron roof. (This was fully compliant with the Borough Council by-laws established in 1898 requiring at least brick side walls on all new buildings in the town centre.) The sash windows all appear to be original, although small louvres have been installed in the front and one window on the right may have been installed for Waitotara County Council in the 1920s. The building retains its original front parapet and all detailing including window surrounds and cornices but has lost the top left finial.

The interior of the building has been partitioned in places on the ground floor, both for the County Council and more latterly for Meteor. The brick walls were cut through in 1972 to provide access to the Bon Accord Chambers building when Meteor expanded. Otherwise, most of the internal spaces are as originally built, especially on the first floor. The staircase with its turned balustrade is particularly elegant, providing a wide access route to the upper floor. Most of the walls have the original painted matchlining while the ceilings are timber board and batten with timber cornices. All the floors are timber, the doors are original and still have their surrounds. There are two deep skylights, all matchlined, which provide additional light to the first floor.

Condition:

The front of the building is in reasonable condition (although it needs paint and some repairs) but the rear timber elevation is in dire need of painting, and possibly weatherboard renovation. Internally, the condition is fair, given that much of the building has been used as a print factory, bindery and storehouse for 60 years. The staircase is in particularly good condition, although some balustrades have been replaced with plain posts.

Resources Consulted:

Wanganui District Council Building files: for 23, 25 & 27 Ridgway Street (some papers misfiled) – has papers from 1947 (office partitions for Waitotara County Council) and 1951 (storeroom for Waitotara County Council); 1968 roller shutter door installed for Meteor Printers.

Wanganui Borough Council Register of Building Permits, Archives Ref AAF 174:1 – 12 Oct 1901, CL Duigan, new building, Ridgway St, shops and offices, brick walls.

Wanganui Borough Council 1908 Insurance Assessment Plan – shows “Duigan Building” with two side brick walls, built across sections 82 & 83. Taskers Billiard Room occupied the rest of section 83 facing Ridgway St. Valuation Records, Wanganui District Council 1862-1921/22 – database at Council Archives.

Wanganui Herald 18 March 1884: Notice that Wanganui-Waitotara Road Board office is now in Ridgway Street, opposite the Public Library, in Mr Dymock’s offices.

Wanganui Herald 7 April 1884: Report of 1st meeting of Waitotara County Council that day, in Mr Dymock’s offices.

Wanganui Herald, 12 Oct 1901 – Tender Notice: Premises, CL Duigan, Ridgway St. A McFarlane, architect. (Plus published other dates.)

Wanganui Herald 8 April 1902 – article on Duigan’s Buildings, Ridgway St. Notes A McFarlane was architect and J Sims the builder. Waitotara County Council and the Hospital & Charitable Aid Board to occupy offices in the new building, as well as CL Duigan with upstairs room for auctions.

Wanganui Herald 6 Sep 1902 – Notice: Jas Watt, solicitor, moving to temporary office in Duigan’s Buildings, Ridgway St, opposite Carrier’s Stand.

Wanganui Herald 29 Jan 1903 – Notice: Mr CH Borlase, solicitor, Ridgway St (Duigan’s Buildings)

Wanganui Herald 26 Feb 1907 – Notice: To let: commodious offices in Ridgway St, presently occupied by CL Duigan. Strong room and all conveniences, would suit solicitor.

Wanganui Herald 4 April 1907 – advert: To let: offices presently occupied by CL Duigan, 112 Ridgway St. Also notes he is moving to larger premises now being erected next Lewis & Wainwright, Ridgway St.

Wanganui Chronicle 3 Sept 1988 – feature on Meteor’s new Business Premises, which includes history of the printing firm.

Wanganui Pride July 2004 (published by Wanganui Chronicle) – feature on Meteor Graphics & Print.
E Feist & HF Richardson, *Bush, People and Pasture: The Story of Waitotara County*, Wanganui Newspapers, 1983.

Wise's PO Directories: 1903, 1911, 1914, 1929, 1941, 1955 and 1959/60.

Comments on Significance:

Architectural

This is an excellent example of an Edwardian gentlemen's office building, planned to provide offices for a variety of purposes, including public meetings. What sets it apart from many other buildings of its era is the integrity of the fabric of the building, both externally and internally. The Ridgway Street façade in particular has almost all its original features, with some new work on the lower façade. Inside, the building retains most of the original spaces and has a particularly fine staircase. The original doors, floors, timber ceilings and matchlined walls all add to the character of the building. The architect, Andrew McFarlane, was skilled at constructing and designing buildings with timber features; his 1912 Berkeley Buildings in Guyton Street is another example of his style of office building; although built in brick it also has matchlined interiors and similar ceilings.

Historic

This building housed Waitotara County Council for 50 years but is now better known for its relationship with Meteor Printers, who have been located here since the 1940s.

Context

The building is a prominent feature in this part of Ridgway Street and contributes a great deal to the streetscape, especially in its relationship to its neighbouring buildings – the Bon Accord Chambers and McFarlane's Hardware Store.

Recommendations:

List in the District Plan Heritage Inventory. Consider for registration under Historic Places Act 1993.

Date: March 2009 **Research by:** Wendy Pettigrew



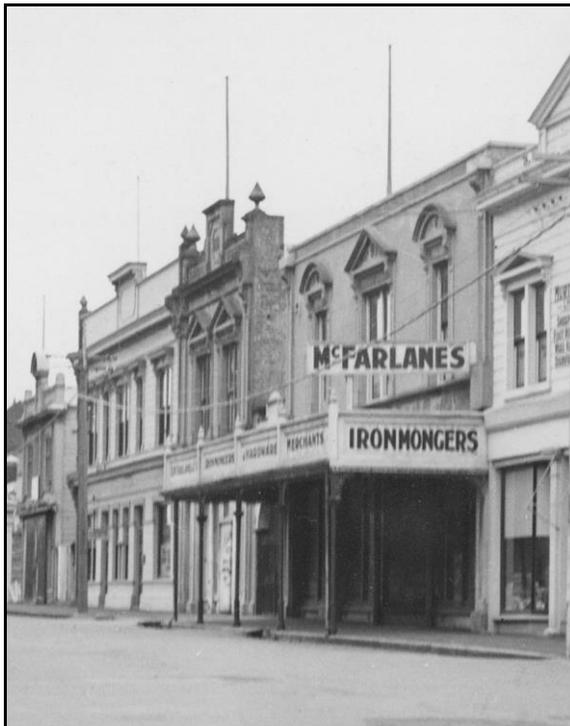
Left: The two Edwardian buildings together which contribute much to the Ridgway Street townscape.
Right: A rear view which shows the wooden back elevation to Duigan's building next to the brick elevations of its two neighbours.



Interior views: Stairs looking down to front door, upper balustrade, front door detail.



From left: Auction room (now Meteor's staff room), ground floor ceiling detail; skylight detail.



Detail from Bethwaite photograph, late 1930s – shows Duigan's Buildings next to Bon Accord Chambers. Note the two entrances on Ridgway Street. Whanganui Regional Museum 2005.56.100.