GORE DISTRICT COUNCIL

HISTORIC HERITAGE ITEM RECORD FORM

HERITAGE ITEM NAME	former Stevenson's Princess Theatre / former St Mary's Hall
ADDRESS	57 Mersey Street, Gore
PHOTOGRAPH	

(GDC, October 2021)

DISTRICT PLAN ITEM NO. (at time of assessment)	H13	**HNZ LIST NO. & CATEGORY**	n / a
LEGAL DESCRIPTION	Section 7 Block XI Town of Gore		
GDC FILE NUMBER	3220420		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION	1913		
ARCHITECT/DESIGNER/ BUILDER	Bremner & Lambeth, architects; Rhodes & Sons, builders		
STYLE	Neoclassical		

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Two-storey building with rectangular footprint and gabled roof. Principal, north-facing elevation is symmetrical with a pair of entrance doors with arched fanlights on the ground floor sheltered by a suspended canopy. Parapet features a balustraded upper with framing consoles and ball motifs; projection box above canopy has a pair of small windows and blind arcade motifs in relief. Roof ventilators and side wall pilasters; multiple external doors for rapid exit of patrons. Double-hung sash windows; four small lean-to extensions on east and west walls.

MATERIALS/STRUCTURE

Ferro-concrete, brick, timber, cement plaster, corrugated metal.

ADDITIONS/ALTERATIONS

Addition of projection booth above canopy on façade (1920s?).

SETTING

The former Princess Theatre stands on the south side of Mersey Street, in that portion of the street bordered by Tamworth Lane in the west and River Street in the east. The hall is built to the road boundary and the scheduled setting is the land parcel on which the building is located.

HISTORY

Stevenson's Pictures announced its 'Grand Opening' in Gore in early April 1910. Founded by William Stevenson, the company toured Southland venues showing motion pictures in local halls until at least 1920. On 8 October 1913 Stevenson opened his own venue in Gore's Mersey Street. The Princess Theatre was lit by electricity and could accommodate 1000 patrons: 800 in the auditorium and 200 in the circle above. The theatre was designed for both movies and live performances and was also the venue for community events, such as the December 1913 prizegiving and final assembly of Gore High School and a community fundraising sing-along for the war effort in July 1940. In 1943 the building was renamed St Mary's Hall and reopened as a Catholic social hall. It was bought by the Gore Operatic Society in 1986 and then passed to the Gore 40 Round Table Club in 1992; it remains in the club's possession.

HISTORIC AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Stevenson's Princess Theatre has historic and social significance for its association with the entertainment history of the town and its use as a social venue and community gathering place. The first purpose-built movie theatre in New Zealand opened in Wellington just three years before Stevenson's Princess Theatre, which demonstrates the rapid rise in popularity of the movies throughout New Zealand and the level of local demand that warranted Stevenson building a theatre in Gore. The building's later use as a social hall by the Catholic community is also notable.

CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Stevenson's Princess Theatre has cultural value as a place of community identity and historic continuity.

ARCHITECTURAL AND AESTHETIC SIGNIFICANCE

The former Stevenson's Princess Theatre has architectural significance as a Neoclassical style theatre designed by Invercargill architect Charles Lambeth of Messrs Bremner & Lambeth. Lambeth (1867-1943) was a builder turned architect who became partners in a residential design and build company with William Bremner in c.1910. The partnership was dissolved in 1914 and after several years in sole practise in Invercargill, where he was also architect to the Southland Frozen Meat Company, Lambeth moved to Hamilton in 1922. Upon his arrival in Hamilton, it was noted that Lambeth had recently designed the boys' and girls' hostels for Gore High School.

TECHNOLOGICAL AND CRAFTSMANSHIP SIGNIFICANCE

The former Stevenson's Princess Theatre has technological and craftsmanship significance for the relatively early date of its concrete construction and its classical façade detailing. Rhodes and Sons were Gore contractors. Adam Speden (1878-1963), a local builder and contractor who also operated a furniture and woodware factory, provided the original seating for the building.

CONTEXTUAL SIGNIFICANCE

The former Stevenson's Princess Theatre has contextual significance as a local landmark within the light industrial sector of Gore's town centre. The Mataura Ensign office and former Creamoata factory are also scheduled heritage items in Mersey Street West.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SIGNIFICANCE

As the building post-dates 1900, any potential archaeological significance of the site would likely relate to its earlier use and development.

SUMMARY OF HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

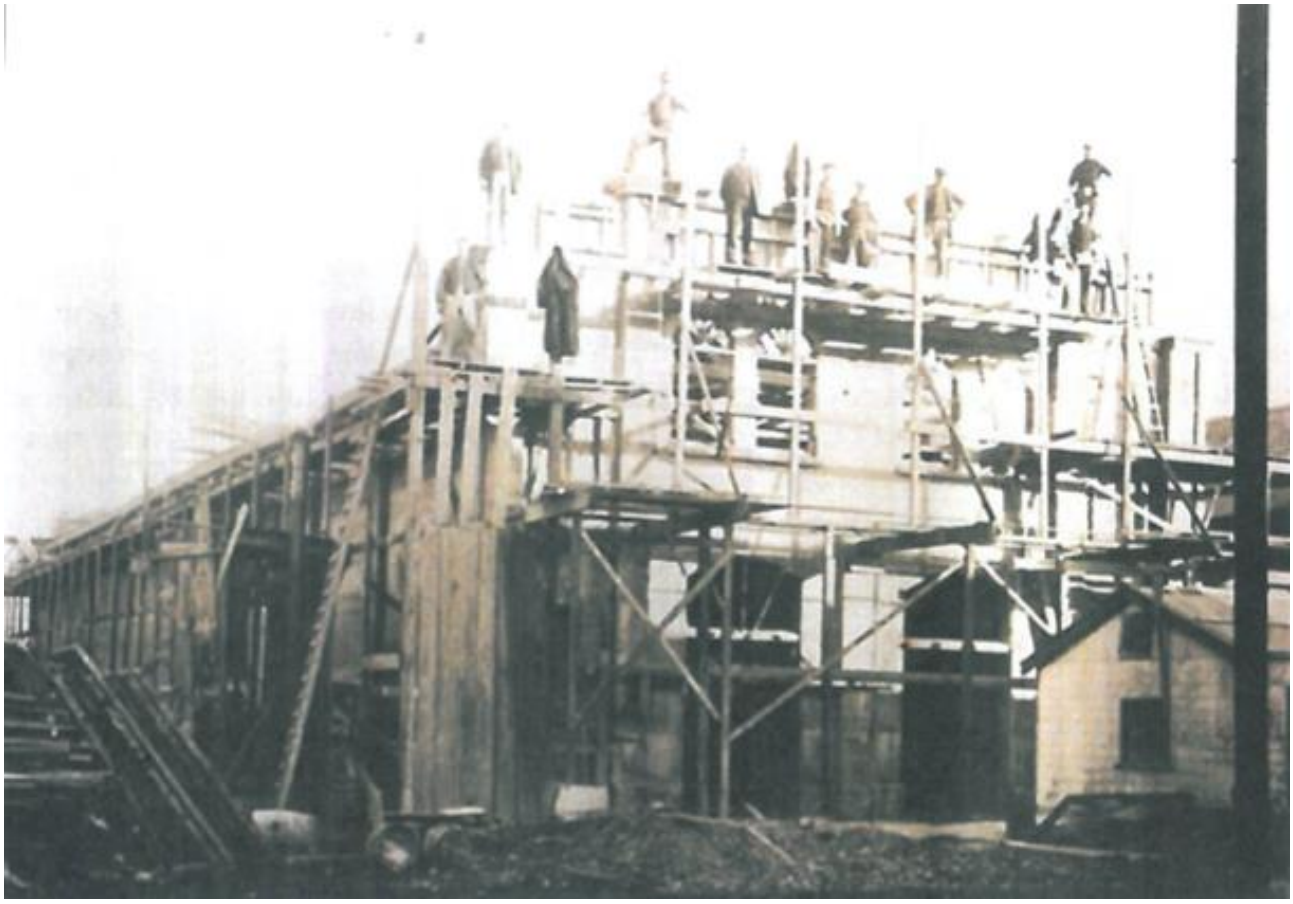
The former Stevenson's Princess Theatre has overall heritage significance to Gore and to the district of Gore as a whole. The building has historical and social significance for its association with the entertainment history of Gore and cultural value as a place of community identity and historic continuity. The former Stevenson's Princess Theatre has architectural significance as a Neoclassical design by Invercargill architect Charles Lambeth and technological and craftsmanship significance for its concrete construction and classical detailing by local contractors Rhodes and Sons. The former Stevenson's Princess Theatre has contextual significance as a local landmark on the periphery of the town centre.

REFERENCES

- *Mataura Ensign* 9 April 1910, p. 1; 6 October 1913, p. 5; 9 October 1913, p. 2; 10 December 1913, p. 1; 7 February 1914, p. 5; 24 January 1920, p. 4.
- *Otautau Standard & Wallace County Chronicle* 24 September 1912, p. 5.
- *Otago Daily Times* 19 July 1940, p. 8.
- *Western Star* 29 February 1940, p. 2.
- *Waikato Times* 19 July 1922, p. 4; 25 January 1943, p. 4.
- *Southland Times* 24 June 1914, p. 6.
- *Progress* 1 April 1914, p. 1036.
- *Bruce Herald* 23 December 1920, p. 2.
- https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/2478

REPORT COMPLETED	18 November 2021
AUTHOR	Dr Ann McEwan / Heritage Consultancy Services
REPORT UPDATED	xx
AUTHOR	xx
PEER REVIEWED	xx
REVIEWER	xx

Extent of scheduling, former Princess Theatre, 57 Mersey Street, Gore.



The theatre under construction. GDC.