
W.B. Armson

A Colonial Architect Rediscovered



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INTRODUCTION

On the 22nd of February this year a memorial service was held in the Barbadoes Street Cemetery, Christchurch, to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of the death of William Barnett Armson. When Armson died he was widely regarded as the leading architect in New Zealand and his office was executing buildings throughout the country from Auckland to Dunedin. Today his name is largely forgotten, many of his major buildings have been demolished and of those that survive, only a few are recognised as being his designs.

The reasons for the decline in Armson's reputation are not hard to find. His most important works were mainly commercial buildings and these have proved particularly vulnerable to changes in taste as well as to the remorseless redevelopment of our city centres. Furthermore, as a true product of the Victorian age, Armson employed a wide range of historical styles, making it even more difficult to readily identify his buildings. Finally, the most productive phase of his career, which began in Christchurch in 1870, was cut short by his untimely death at the age of fifty in 1883.

If fate has been unkind to both Armson's reputation and his buildings, she has nevertheless compensated in other ways. The architectural firm which he founded in Christchurch in 1870 survives today as Collins, Hunt and Loveridge and the office still contains many records of Armson's activity, including documents, photographs, his library and most important of all, a large collection of his drawings. The survival of these records, combined with the remarkably high quality of the drawings provided the initial impetus for this exhibition. The centennial of Armson's death presented the perfect occasion.

Research for the exhibition has been undertaken by five students enrolled in our Art History M.A. course on the history of New Zealand architecture. From the beginning the project was a co-operative venture although each student took responsibility for one section of the catalogue. Once we began to work on the exhibition it became immediately apparent that the range of Armson's work was more varied and higher in quality than we had imagined. The task of deciding which drawings to include in the exhibition thus became much more difficult. Our final selection is based first, on the intrinsic interest of the designs and second, on the quality of the drawings, although in virtually all cases these two criteria coincided. We have also aimed to present as many types of drawing as possible within the limited number of works it was possible to exhibit. Although designs from all phases of Armson's career are included, we have selected a large number of drawings for two late works, St. Mary's Church, Timaru and

the Bank of New Zealand, Dunedin, in order to give a more complete indication of the way in which the architect conveyed his ideas.

We wish to record our thanks to the many individuals and institutions who helped to make this exhibition possible. Without the willing co-operation of Maurice Hunt and Graeme Loveridge, who generously placed all the Armson material in their possession at our disposal, we could not have even begun. At the Robert McDougall Art Gallery, the Director, John Coley, welcomed the proposal for the exhibition and found a place for it within a busy exhibition schedule; Lyndsay Knowles undertook the daunting task of preparing the drawings for display while Peter Ireland carried out the design and installation of the exhibition.

We also wish to thank Mr Robin Griffin, Bank of New Zealand Archivist, Wellington; Mr J. R. Eyles, Director, West Coast Historical Museum, Hokitika; Mrs Joan Woodward, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch; Miss H. Spooner, Librarian, Otago Early Settlers' Museum, Dunedin; Archdeacon Bernard Wilkinson, Oamaru; Mr B. N. Norris, Curator, Lyttelton Museum; Mrs Wendy Garvey, Librarian, School of Architecture, University of Auckland; Mrs P. R. Wilson; and Mr Tony Cooper, Christchurch Boys' High School. Photography for the exhibition was carried out by Duncan Shaw-Brown, Merylyn Hooper and Barbara Cottrell of the University of Canterbury Photographic Department. Thanks are also due to Jan Hart, Megan Gainsford and John Emery for assistance with the design of the catalogue, and to Judy Boyle, who typed the text.

The publication of this catalogue would not have been possible without the generous financial assistance of the Bank of New Zealand, the Canterbury Branch of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, the Canterbury Regional Committee of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust and the Christchurch Civic Trust.

Finally, it is our sad duty to record our debt to Mr J. K. Collins whose history of the firm which Armson founded provided the starting point for our own research. When we discussed the exhibition with Mr Collins earlier this year he promised us every assistance as well as his enthusiastic support. His sudden death prevented him from fulfilling that promise and therefore we wish to dedicate this catalogue to his memory.

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ARMSON'S EARLY CAREER Melbourne, Dunedin, Hokitika.

"[William Barnett] Armson was born in London in 1834, the son of Francis William Armson and Jane Barnett [Armson.]" This statement taken from J. K. Collins's *A Century of Architecture* is virtually all we know of the architect's early life, education and family background. Armson's Death Certificate provides two more pieces of information: the occupation of his father is listed there as "Architect", and the informant for the details of Armson's death is "F. W. Martin (Nephew)", implying that Armson had at least one sibling, the different surname of the nephew suggesting a sister.

According to Collins, the Armson family came to New Zealand in 1852 but left two years later for Victoria, Australia, finally settling in Melbourne in 1854.² The reason for emigrating from Britain to Australasia is not given, but if F. W. Armson was indeed an architect, one can assume that he was in search of greater employment opportunities.

At the age of twenty the young William Armson was articled to the Melbourne architectural and civil engineering firm of Purchas and Swyer for a period of six years.³ Although nothing is known of the family's circumstances, a certain amount of material comfort is suggested by Armson's apprenticeship, as in Victoria during the 1850s, £100 was the standard payment to be made by parent or guardian in order for a son to enter into an Indenture of Apprenticeship to the Profession of Architecture,⁴ and this would have been beyond the means of many lower income families. In return for £100 and a promise of diligence and honest behaviour the firm agreed to instruct the apprentice in his chosen profession.⁵

Following the normal procedure of architectural training in nineteenth-century Australia, Armson would have acquired civil engineering and surveying as well as architectural skills. His engineering training was probably received from C. R. Swyer, who later emigrated to New Zealand where he became Provincial Engineer in Otago. (Swyer later designed the Cargill Monument in Dunedin.) Purchas, no doubt, took care of his architectural education.

Armson's training was fairly typical for the mid-nineteenth century in Australia. He emerged from his apprenticeship with two professions, as did most apprentices, and during his early years in New Zealand always described himself in notices he placed in the newspapers advertising his services as "Architect and Surveyor."

Only three drawings survive from Armson's Melbourne period. They date from 1860-61, shortly after he completed his apprenticeship, and demonstrate that he was already an accomplished draughtsman. The function of the drawings, which form a related group, is not known; they may have been for private commissions but more likely they were for projects being undertaken

by Purchas and Swyer.

The earliest of these drawings is a Gothic design for "A Gold Case." The detailed and highly finished drawing is executed in pencil with coloured washes suggesting that it was designed to impress the judges of a competition or an important client. This design reflects the influence of eighteenth-century Gothic pattern books such as B. and T. Langley's *Gothic Architecture Improved*, (1747),⁶ a book which shows Gothic as a purely ornamental style. This was an antiquated notion by the mid-nineteenth century when the Gothic Revival architects were integrating the principal tenets of the Gothic style into the very structure of their buildings, and tells us something of Armson's taste and training.

The Gold Case was probably an interior fitting for a bank, and the other two drawings are elevations of the Bank of Australasia in Collins Street, Melbourne, the heart of the city's commercial district.

The third of Armson's surviving Melbourne drawings is incomplete, but a note in Armson's hand provides an explanation. It reads: "Unfinished from want of time before sailing of steamer." Was the steamer referred to the "Alcyone" which left Melbourne for Dunedin, New Zealand in mid-March 1862?

Armson is listed as one of the thirteen cabin passengers on board this steamer when it arrived in Dunedin on 1st April 1862.⁷ Despite arriving in the country on April Fool's Day, Armson wasted no time in advertising his presence by placing a prominent advertisement on the front page of the *Otago Daily Times* for 7th April 1862.⁸

Armson's arrival was timely. When Gabriel Read discovered gold in a gully in the Tuapeka in May 1861, the news brought hundreds of prospectors from all over the world, but particularly from the gold fields in Australia which were yielding an ever-decreasing amount of gold. In 1862, gold was extracted from the Clutha and Wakatipu gold fields. These gold discoveries transformed Dunedin from a small church settlement to the foremost town in New Zealand.⁹ People flocked to Otago and the gold revenue brought an era of prosperity. As order began to emerge from the chaos, related businesses were established, supplying the populace with necessities and then later, luxuries. Commerce flourished and as Armson correctly anticipated there was much work to occupy an architect.

Unfortunately, as there was no regulating body to standardise the use of the term "architect" in the early period anyone wishing to attract clients could call himself an architect and not be challenged. Competition amongst such "architects" was intense and Armson must have recognised this almost at once and decided to take a safer option and ensure his livelihood whilst still practicing his profession. He applied for the position of architectural draughtsman in the Provincial Engineer's

Department and was appointed at a salary of £300 per annum. Either by coincidence or design, Armson came to work under C. R. Swyer again who already held the position of Provincial Engineer. After only two months Armson's considerable abilities were realised and he was promoted to the position of Assistant Architect at the increased salary of £400.¹⁰

Little is known of the exact nature of Armson's work during his years with the Provincial Government of Otago. The *Otago Provincial Government Gazette* for November 1862 carries a section entitled "Architectural Works". This lists a number of projects with which Armson was probably involved. There is a reference to additions and alterations to schools, police stations, goals, hospitals, court houses, barracks in both Dunedin and Oamaru, as well as mention of some more unusual works such as "Dipping Tanks for Sheep", "Portable Houses for Female Prisoners and Lunatics", "Additions to the Presbyterian Church" and "Fittings at the Immigrants' Barracks."¹¹

Although the provincial architects were far from idle, the next session of the Provincial Government voted to keep the salary of the Assistant Architect the same while the salaries of other officers were increased.¹² The anomaly prompted Armson to apply to the Provincial Engineer for an increase in salary. It is amusing to note that he signs himself "W. B. Armson, Architect", as he was to do for the rest of his life, although the position he held was actually that of an Assistant Architect. This points to the fact that even at this early stage in his career, Armson was a thorough professional in his dealings with others. Armson's letter concludes: "It is with extreme reluctance that I have addressed you on a matter so purely personal, but in justice to myself and my professional position, I am compelled to do so."¹³ Thus it was a sense of professional self-esteem rather than personal privation that prompted Armson to write the letter.

Armson's letter was forwarded to the Provincial Secretary by Swyer (to whom it was formally addressed) with an accompanying letter which stated that

Mr. Armson is a very valuable officer, and considering the importance of the position he holds [I am] of the opinion [that] his services cannot fairly be valued at a less salary than £500 a year. . . .¹⁴

This letter also gives an insight into the frustrations of working for the Provincial Government at this time, for it was during the period 1863-4 that the Otago Provincial Government realised that it had overextended itself and set about implementing a policy of retrenchment in the face of diminishing revenue.

Armson's letter was successful only in extracting a further £50 per annum from the Provincial Government — bringing his salary to £450.¹⁵

C. R. Swyer's Report on the Provincial Engineer's Department of 5th September 1863 further illustrates the constraints and difficulties his department was operating under because of the Provincial Government's cost-cutting. He complained that salaries were so low that really competent men could not be induced to take up appointments and that he was understaffed and was unable to complete many building programmes as a result.¹⁶

The next year, 1864, the financial difficulty which the Provincial Government faced worsened. The gold discoveries of 1862 had caused the kind of inflationary spending which could only result in disastrous bankruptcy when what seemed like assured long-term prosperity evaporated.

The province fell heavily into debt as gold revenue waned and there were serious repercussions for Provincial Government employees. Discontent and criticism seemed to centre around the Engineer's Department, as exemplified by this letter which appeared in *The Saturday Review* on 23rd April, 1864:

The Provincial Engineer's Department costs us the sum of £6,955!!! Mr Swyer and a clerk could do all the duties that devolve upon the present staff, comprising as it does a chief at a salary of £750 and about sixteen flunkies!!! This department should be abolished forthwith, Mr Swyer himself is quite able for the duties.¹⁷

This trend in public opinion reached its peak with a so-called "Indignation Meeting" of 6th June, 1864. This was a gathering numbering about 2,000 people in the Octagon, and it was organised to press the Provincial Government to discharge the whole staff of its officials (about 700 employees). The Provincial Government's representative responded that the staff of the Provincial Engineer's Department had been given two months notice.¹⁸

The officers of the Provincial Engineer's Department objected to being dismissed so summarily, however, and presented a petition to the Provincial Council of Otago. The petition begins with the statement: ". . . your petitioners have been engaged in Public service for various periods in some instances three years," (Armson had been there 26 months) and continues:

. . . your petitioners are informed and believe that their engagements are annual, and that they are entitled to receive compensation for loss of office in accordance therewith . . . many of your petitioners are professional men who have sacrificed all opportunities of private practice on the faith of receiving permanent employment in the public service, and are therefore injured to a considerable extent by summary dismissal, inasmuch as it would be impossible for them to establish themselves in practice in Dunedin, at a season of unusual depression, without considerable loss of time and money; and that most of them would not have accepted employment at the moderate salaries given by Government unless they had understood that their engagements were annual.¹⁹

This passage of the petition reads very much as if written by Armson himself, especially the sentence referring to "sacrificing all opportunities of private practice," which echoes a similar complaint regarding being debarred from private practice in the letter of September 1863 where Armson presented his case for an increase in salary.

Not surprisingly, Armson's signature comes first at the end of the petition, followed by Edward Rumsey, which reinforces still further the implication that the organization and writing of the petition were largely done by Armson. The petition made its point and a "redundancy payment" of six months salary was voted.²⁰ Armson received half his annual salary but as he had correctly envisaged in the petition prior to his discharge, it was difficult to establish himself in practice in Dunedin. However, he immediately advertised his services upon discharge from the Provincial Government — a notice appeared twice in the Professional and

Trade Notices column of the *Otago Daily Times* advising that:

Mr W. B. ARMSON

Architect

(late Architect to the Provincial Government)
Has resumed the practice of his profession and
has an office in Princes Street Chambers
opposite the Bank of Otago.²¹

Armson appears to have gained little work at this time as no tender notices appear under his name. Competition was fierce; the advertisements for other architects were particularly numerous at this time — Messrs Monson, Lambeth, Luscombe, Smith, Hardy, Greenfield, Vahland, Livingstone and Kerr all described themselves as architects and frequently advertised their services alongside the better known R. A. Lawson, David Ross and Mason and Clayton. This crowding of architects is further illustrated by the relationship of the architects' offices to one another. Armson shared rooms with a John MacGregor and H. F. Hardy who described themselves as "architects", and all three were in a building next door to R. A. Lawson and near to David Ross.²² The kind of competition implied by the surplus of architects would not have fostered friendly relations amongst men forced to work cheek by jowl and this is evidenced by the fact that there was no move to form an association for the protection of professional standards. It seems to have been very much every man for himself.

For Armson, however, there was an opportunity to escape. His architectural draughtsman while working for the Provincial Government had been Edward Rumsey and it was he who found work for Armson. Rumsey won the contract to design an Anglican church at Oamaru. Tenders were called for "a portion of the Church of England at Oamaru" on 8th December 1864 by Rumsey and Jackson.²³ Rumsey introduced and recommended Armson to the Church Building Committee as an architect able to produce working drawings from Rumsey's design in the event that Rumsey receive a government appointment in Auckland,²⁴ as a result of a competition he had entered.

Edward Rumsey did, in fact, submit the winning design for the Supreme Court House in Auckland in that year and in order to supervise that project he left Dunedin for Auckland. This gave Armson a secure job and an opportunity to move out of Dunedin whilst still assured of an income. Armson shifted to Oamaru in late December 1864 or early January 1865 and immediately set up practice with a J. Thornley who was already resident there. They placed the following notice in the *Oamaru Times and Waitaki Reporter* on 9th January 1865:

Thornley and Armson
Architects, Civil Engineers, Surveyors
and Land and Estate Agents.

There is no information available to indicate whether the services of these two versatile gentlemen were called upon by the private sector in Oamaru, but since the working drawings for the Anglican Church are signed by both Thornley and Armson, it can be assumed that it was a working partnership.

The church history refers to extra working drawings being necessary because the site for the church was shifted a distance down the slope of the ground,²⁵ so Armson and Thornley had a challenging problem to occupy them in this contract without searching for others.

Only three bays of the nave and the north aisle of Rumsey's design were built under Armson's supervision. The original ground plan showed an area marked by three dotted lines on the south side, with the wording, "Aisle may be added here." Rumsey's letter to the church committee makes it clear that his object in making the south aisle optional was to reduce costs.²⁶ The committee agreed with his suggestion to omit the south aisle until after the chancel was erected²⁷ and Armson supervised the construction accordingly. St. Luke's is still without a south aisle.

The *Otago Daily Times* reported on St. Luke's after the corner stone was laid on 20th June, 1865, and in its description there is an implied allusion to Armson's view on the finishing of the church:

The whole of the woodwork of the church will be varnished, and we understand that it is intended that every material used in the construction shall exhibit its real nature without disguise by painting or otherwise.²⁸

A concern with "truth to materials" is not a characteristic of Armson's secular buildings, but in church architecture he seems to be up-to-date with contemporary British developments.

After the church was opened, Armson stayed on in Oamaru continuing his partnership with Thornley until November 1865. Contracts must have been few, however, for Armson returned to Dunedin in early December. He boarded the steamship "South Australian" bound for Hokitika and Melbourne on 20th December, 1865 and landed at Hokitika on 1st February, 1866.²⁹ No doubt Armson anticipated better work prospects in the new "gold towns" of Hokitika, Ross and Greymouth.

As Hokitika was a port of call on the shipping route from Melbourne to Dunedin Armson may have already visited the town when he arrived in New Zealand in 1861. He advertised on the front page of the *West Coast Times* on the same day as his arrival:

MR W. B. ARMSON,
Architect, etc.,

(Late Architect to the Government of Otago)

Offices at the Queenstown Hotel, Revell Street.³¹

The suggestion that he had arranged office accommodation prior to his arrival indicates a certain degree of familiarity with the town.

Armson was not the first or only architect to take up practice in Hokitika. One of the earliest records of professional activity is a *West Coast Times* advertisement appearing in July 1865 for "Nees and Luscombe: Architects and Builders."³² R. C. Luscombe, as we have seen, was practicing in Dunedin at the same time as Armson in 1862. It seems that Luscombe and a few other Dunedin architects also felt it wise to follow fortune to the West Coast. G. Greenfield, D. Ross and C. G. Smith were three other architects who had all previously practiced in Dunedin and who advertised their services in Hokitika. The decline of the Otago gold fields and the rise of the Westland fields must have encouraged them

to take up practice in Hokitika which, as the commercial centre of the goldfields, was also the focus for architectural activity.

Armson's arrival in Hokitika coincided with the conversion of leaseholds to freeholds in the Hokitika business area,³³ a move which resulted in a large amount of rebuilding and upgrading of existing hastily-erected buildings. Thus, many of Armson's contracts were for additions and alterations mostly centred around Hokitika and Greymouth. No doubt many of his colleagues undertook work of a similar nature.

By 10th March 1866 the *West Coast Times* reported in its local events column on the progress of building in the town which they described as

rapidly advancing, . . . a very superior style of structure is superseding the rudely put up stores which were made to suffice for the exigences of trade during the first days of the goldfields. Substantial warehouses, new banks and commodious hotels are gradually giving an entirely altered character to the architectural appearance of the town.³⁴

Photographs of Hokitika dating from 1866 show the architectural character of the town as being classical, with wooden buildings "dressed" to simulate the columns and cornices of classical stonework.

This style for commercial buildings was, in many ways, a very practical one. The construction methods afforded quick, cheap erection, simple alteration, and, importantly, easy salvage. Their facades gave an air of permanence and civilization to the utilitarian and often temporary substance of the buildings. They were also an important adjunct to the down-to-earth nature of diggings life. For all their impermanence, the classical facades of Hokitika's commercial buildings evoked historical and architectural associations which would have been reassuringly familiar to diggers from Victorian Britain. The architectural language which Armson used was an international one, and was as comprehensible in Hokitika, as in Dunedin, Melbourne or London. What distinguished the buildings of Hokitika, however, was the rude contrast between the architectural pretensions of their facades and the often flimsy and rudimentary structures behind. The incongruity of building in the style of Greece and Rome amongst the forests of New Zealand's West Coast, so apparent to us today, probably never occurred to Armson and his contemporaries.

Armson's first building on the West Coast is an excellent example of an edifice which fulfills all these requirements for a gold town building and exemplifies the part architecture played in commercial competition. The office and manager's residence for the Union Bank of Australia, which he began in early April, cost £1,100 and were described as "substantial and convenient for business and as a residence."³⁵ Although the bank appears to be constructed of stone a footnote in the Bank Inspector's report notes; "Necessarily they are built of timber and the roof is of iron."³⁶

Photographs of the bank reveal that Armson did not intend the use of timber to be obvious. He has given the building all the characteristics of a classical stone building, a stepped forward pedimented frontage, vousoirs, and quoins as well as engaged pilasters and motifs resembling the triglyphs and metopes of a classical frieze. Armson's interest in being truthful to

materials has here been subordinated to the client's concern for an imposing facade.

Supervision of this project did not prevent Armson from commencing others and during April 1866 he undertook the design of The Café de Paris for Mr P. Solomon.³⁷ In this building again, the majority of the facade derives from classical precedent.

By the time Armson completed the Café de Paris his professional standing seems to have become more secure, for he no longer advertised his services with the regularity of his first months in Hokitika.

His next commission was additions to the Corinthian Hall for J. F. Byrne, another classical building which, when the additions were complete, was described in the *West Coast Times* as "most imposing, excellently finished, and really an ornament to that part of town."³⁸

Following this period of establishment, commissions seem to have flowed thick and fast. The editorial describing the completed Union Bank building must have enhanced his reputation even further. The bank is described as "a very creditable and well-finished structure, and quite in keeping with the appearance of the town." The writer goes on to describe the exterior as "unpretentious in appearance, but yet tasteful being corniced on three sides, and the front windows [being] surmounted with plain label heads."³⁹ Praise such as this for Armson's abilities led to his being much in demand for all kinds of work. In the following months he designed additions to a bookseller's, alterations to a hotel, a cottage for the town coroner, alterations to a clothing store and another hotel, altered the Bank of New Zealand in Greymouth, erected a new two-storied hotel, designed additions to a shop, sunk and slabbed a well and designed a billiard room to supplement the facilities of the Café de Paris.

Considering the variety and profusion of these commissions, Armson's next move is difficult to understand — he applied for the position of Town Surveyor to the Municipal Corporation of Hokitika. Having experienced the frustrations of selling his architectural skill to the Provincial Government in Otago and being insufficiently rewarded, it is puzzling why he should want to re-enter public service when his private practice was prospering. When he made his application, the councillors were still discussing whether their Town Surveyor should be debarred from private practice, so Armson could not have been certain that there would be any financial advantage.

As it was, Armson was one of five applicants for the position.⁴⁰ After voting on the candidates four times, the council remained equally divided — four votes had been cast for both Armson and his opponent, a Mr Frew. Fortunately for Armson the chairman gave his casting vote in his favour.⁴¹ Perhaps Armson's accomplishments in the short time he had been in Hokitika helped swing the vote. By comparison, Frew was relatively unknown, and is not to be found advertising his services in the Professional columns of the *West Coast Times*, although *Harnett's Directory* lists him as an "Engineer, surveyor, etc."⁴²

Armson's salary was decided by the Hokitika

Municipal Corporation only after some discussion and division of the councillors. They were opposed on the issue of whether the salary of the Town Surveyor should be fixed at £750 per annum "thereby securing the whole of his services" by which they meant that he would be debarred from any private practice of his profession while employed by the Municipal Corporation, or whether his salary should be fixed at the lower sum of £500 per annum with the right of private practice.⁴³ Parsimony overruled the motions proposing these generous amounts, and Armson's salary was settled at £300, £150 less than the sum the Otago Provincial Government had paid him, but since he retained the right to take on commissions privately, his financial outlook in Hokitika was considerably brighter than it had been in Dunedin. Despite the fact that competition for architectural work in Hokitika was equally as fierce as in Dunedin, Armson's reputation as a thorough professional seems to have ensured his continued prosperity, and during the period of his employment by the Municipal Corporation his tender notices in the *West Coast Times* do not seem to diminish in number.

Armson took up his appointment as Town Surveyor on 30th October 1866⁴⁴ yet less than one month later he called for tenders for the erection of a hotel in Buller.

As Town Surveyor, the work he undertook seems trivial by comparison with the architectural work he was recently involved with and the frustrations he encountered with the bureaucracy of the Municipal Corporation must have been annoying. Letters from Armson recorded in the Municipal Council's *Letter Book* testify to many petty hindrances which must have made working conditions difficult for Armson. His request for six wheelbarrows, for example, was denied,⁴⁵ and his purchasing power limited to £5.⁴⁶

One interesting piece of design work Armson undertook during this period was the design of a seal for the Municipal Council. This featured "a Maori in native garb . . . and a digger, heavily accoutered — as if just ready to start on a mining campaign."⁴⁷

Armson's main duties as Town Surveyor seem to have revolved around the forming, metalling and curbing of Hokitika's streets. He encountered some difficulty in this work; a letter to the Council expresses his concern over his ability to carry out the forming of roads when "people persist in erecting cottages in the middle of the prospective street."⁴⁸

Some friction seems to have arisen between Armson and the councillors over his time-consuming but thorough surveying methods. The dispute centred around a bridge which two councillors wanted replaced before the next rainstorm, and when Armson replied that he needed to survey first, the councillor crossly replied that he did not see the use of the Public Works Committee passing resolutions and giving instructions if these were not carried out by Armson. At the same meeting mention is first made of a competition to find a design for a new Town Hall, and the meeting was concluded with Armson being instructed to select a site outside the town boundary for a manure depot.⁴⁹ Among other duties, Armson was also required to decide upon positions for public urinals around the town.⁵⁰

One of Armson's sidelines in Hokitika was to act as an agency for a sharebroker and mining agent⁵¹ and he

was also engineer and surveyor to the short-lived Ross and Hokitika Tramway Company.⁵² As Armson had plenty of employment during this period perhaps these other demands on his time led to his resignation as Town Surveyor on March 1st 1867.⁵³

Armson's private practice still flourished. During the months of February and March he advertised for tenders for a Union Bank of Australia to be executed at the Waimea.⁵⁴ He also designed further additions and alterations to the Café de Paris⁵⁵ and produced drawings for an Episcopal church to be built at Ross.⁵⁶ This church is described by the *West Coast Times* as "a very pretty one" and "in every way worthy of its purpose."⁵⁷ Seven days later, Armson called for tenders for the erection of an Episcopal church at Greymouth.

In the later months of 1867 Armson designed a store for James Chesney and Company — a simple wooden affair with a prominent divided balustrade along the roofline — additions and alterations to a bookseller's (the *Times* reports that the "handsome front" is "an ornament to that part of town") and designed a grandstand for the Stewards of the Hokitika Annual Races.

In early 1868 he designed a shop, additions and alterations to the Greymouth Tramway Terminus and the Bank of Australasia at Hokitika. Then there was a three month gap before tender notices for additions and alterations for the Shakespeare Hotel and the Union Bank of Australia at Greymouth appeared.

His second cottage design was advertised as completed and awaiting tenders on 1st August 1868 and this presumably was the cottage for James Chesney for which a drawing survives. It was a simple, one-storied house with French windows, a verandah and decorated barge boards.

His commissions for the last two months of 1868 were additions to two hotels, one in Greymouth the other in Hokitika, and extensions and business premises for a Mr McBeath.

In early 1869, Armson designed some very solid-looking brewery buildings, additions and alterations for another hotel and had two commissions in Greymouth, one for additions to a shop and the other for the design of a two-storied building for a Mr James Taylor, which still stands, just off Mawhera Quay.

On 6th March 1869 Armson received the most important commission of his Hokitika period when he was appointed architect of the Town Hall and Literary Society building.⁵⁸ He was required to produce plans and specifications in one week, although the building took five months to complete. Compositionally, the facade of the Hokitika Town Hall is a re-working of the same classical theme explored in the Melbourne bank drawings and in the drawing for Government Buildings, Dunedin. The Town Hall in many ways can be seen as Armson's "monument" in Hokitika, commemorating the years he spent there, just as the Bank of New Zealand in Dunedin of 1883 is an architectural memorial to all his life and work. Although it survived until recently, the Town Hall has now been demolished.

After the completion of this building in Hokitika Armson went on to design a bank at Ross, a shop in Hokitika and the Bank of New South Wales in Greymouth and finally a Bank of New South Wales at

Ross in February 1870. The tender notice for this last named bank is the last mention of Armson in the *West Coast Times* for 1870. What became of him between February when he was in Hokitika and December when he re-appeared in Christchurch is not known. Armson may have taken a trip to Britain during this period, visited his parents in Australia or just taken a well-earned holiday. His departure from Hokitika does not seem to have been noticed — he was not prominent in

local affairs except in his professional capacity — and there are no newspaper reports of Hokitika losing his professional services. Even if there is no contemporary account summing up his West Coast career prior to his departure for Christchurch, his buildings remained standing long after he left, silent testimonials to his valuable contribution in establishing the architectural character of nineteenth-century Hokitika, a character which has now all but disappeared.

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- (1) [J. K. Collins], *A Century of Architecture*. Christchurch, 1965, p. 7.
- (2) *Ibid.*
- (3) *Ibid.*
- (4) J. M. Freeland, *The Making of a Profession*. Melbourne, 1971, p. 204.
- (5) *Ibid.*
- (6) B. and T. Langley, *Gothic Architecture Improved by Rules and Proportions*. London, 1747, Plate 52.
- (7) Passenger list in *Otago Daily Times*. Dunedin, 1st April 1862, p. 2.
- (8) *Otago Daily Times*. 7th April, 1862, p. 1.
- (9) K. C. McDonald, *City of Dunedin; a Century of Civic Enterprise*. Dunedin, 1965, p. 83.
- (10) *Otago Provincial Council, Votes and Proceedings, Session XVII*. 1863, records W. Armson's name in the Return of Officers in the Provincial Establishments as being first appointed Draughtsman on 21st April 1862 and on 19th June 1862 appointed Assistant Architect. *Votes and Proceedings* p. 6.
- (11) *Otago Provincial Government Gazette*. 24th December 1862, p. 3.
- (12) *Votes and Proceedings, Sessions XVI-XVII*. 1862-1863, pp. 33-40.
- (13) W. B. Armson's letter to Provincial Engineer, 17th September 1863, National Archives, *OP7/2456.
- (14) *Ibid.*
- (15) *Ibid.* Note to this effect added on to top of letter.
- (16) *Engineer's Report, Provincial Government Gazette*. 5th September 1863, p. 216.
- (17) *The Saturday Review*. Dunedin, 23rd April 1864, p. 63.
- (18) *Ibid.* 11th June 1864, p. 1.
- (19) *Votes and Proceedings, Session XVIII*. 1864, pp. 7-8.
- (20) *Ibid.* p. 145.
- (21) *Otago Daily Times*. 8th July 1864, p. 7.
- (22) H. Knight, *Princes Street by Gaslight*. Dunedin, 1976, p. 31.
- (23) *Otago Daily Times*. 11th July 1864, p. 4.
- (24) *Oamaru Times and Waitaki Reporter*. Oamaru, 9th January 1865, p. 4.
- (25) W. R. Naylor, *Anglican Centenary: A Narrative covering one hundred years of the Church of England in North Otago*. Oamaru, 1962, p. 20.
- (26) *Ibid.* p. 27.
- (27) *Ibid.*
- (28) *Otago Daily Times*. 1st July 1865, p. 5.
- (29) *Oamaru Times and Reporter*. 23rd November 1865, p. 5.
- (30) *Otago Daily Times*. "Shipping Notice", 19th December 1865, p. 1.
- (31) *West Coast Times*. Hokitika, 1st February 1866, p. 1.
- (32) *Ibid.* 9th July 1865, p. 1.
- (33) M. J. Halket, *Westland's Golden Sixties*. Wellington, 1959, p. 46.
- (34) *West Coast Times*. 10th March 1866, p. 3.
- (35) *Inspector's Report — Hokitika Branch Union Bank of Australia*. A.N.Z. Bank Archives, Series 8, 31st January 1868.
- (36) *West Coast Times*. "Monthly Summary", April 1866, p. 3.
- (37) *Ibid.* "Monthly Summary", 13th August 1866, p. 1.
- (38) *Ibid.* 20th July 1866, p. 2.
- (39) *Minutes, Hokitika Municipal Council, 1866-68*. 16th October 1866, pp. 27-30. West Coast Historical Museum, Hokitika.
- (40) *Ibid.* pp. 29-30.
- (41) *Harnett's Westland Directory*. 1866.
- (42) *Minutes*. p. 75.
- (43) *Ibid.*
- (44) *West Coast Times*. 9th February 1867, p. 2.
- (45) *Minutes*. Letter Number 12 from Town Surveyor.
- (46) *West Coast Times*. 5th February 1867, p. 2.
- (47) *Ibid.* 9th February 1867, p. 3.
- (48) *Ibid.* p. 2.
- (49) *Ibid.*
- (50) *Ibid.*
- (51) *Ibid.* 24th December 1867, p. 3.
- (52) *Ibid.* 28th November 1867, p. 2.
- (53) *Minutes*. 1st March 1867, p. 115.
- (54) *West Coast Times*. 29th February 1867, p. 3.
- (55) *Ibid.* 11th April 1867, p. 3.
- (56) *Ibid.* 13th April 1867, p. 3.
- (57) *Ibid.* 2nd September 1867, p. 2.
- (58) *Hokitika Municipal Council, Letterbook B*. p. 239. West Coast Historical Museum, Hokitika.

ARMSON IN CHRISTCHURCH 1870-1883

Armson's arrival in Christchurch inaugurated the most productive as well as the most creative phase of his career. On November 21st, 1870, *The Press* announced his presence in the city:

Mr Armson
Architect and Civil Engineer
(formerly Architect to Government of Otago)
Office in Colombo Street

Next door to
Messrs Wheeler and Son, Photographers.

Nothing is known of Armson's whereabouts from the date of his last contract in Hokitika, for which tenders were called on 22nd February 1870 until his arrival in Christchurch at the end of the year. However, as he was not listed in the newspapers as being among the passengers who disembarked at Lyttelton or Kaiapoi during November one must assume that he had travelled to Christchurch by land from somewhere in the South Island.

Armson was to work in Christchurch from this time until his death in 1883 and it is in Christchurch that he prospered as an architect and where his style reached its maturity. Armson's commissions during this period are recorded in the register of contracts preserved in the office of Collins, Hunt and Loveridge. This practice, one of the two oldest architectural firms in New Zealand, was founded by Armson in 1870. The register records every contract from small painting and alteration jobs to large office buildings, schools, hotels and warehouses. While most of this work was done in Christchurch the register shows that Armson was working throughout South Canterbury and that he was building banks all over New Zealand. Commissions must have come quickly to Armson. In 1871, his first full year in Christchurch, he handled contracts worth over £8,000 and the need for additional staff saw John James Collins engaged as an articled pupil. By 1881 Armson employed thirteen men.

Although Armson's earliest known design for Christchurch, a complex of theatre, shops and offices with an ornate classical facade, remained unbuilt, he had nevertheless arrived in the city at an opportune time. Pastoralism on the plains had brought prosperity to Canterbury and by the 1870s Christchurch had developed into a commercial centre of considerable importance. Many of the temporary wooden buildings of the early years were now being replaced with buildings of more permanent materials.

Of the architects in Christchurch at the time of Armson's arrival, B. W. Mountfort was the most notable. Mountfort had held the position of Provincial Architect since 1855 and had designed many major public buildings, including the Provincial Government Buildings (1859-1865) the first Town Hall (1857) and the Museum (1870). He had also been extensively

employed by the Church of England. Armson, however, was not in direct competition with Mountfort as he concentrated his attention on commercial buildings in the centre of Christchurch.

Armson's commercial buildings followed two main styles, classical and Italian Gothic. Like all colonial architects of the nineteenth century, he built according to British precedent. In England the rapid growth of towns and cities in the wake of the Industrial Revolution saw the rise of many new building types. Just as architects had previously looked towards the classical style of the Italian Renaissance for their churches and houses, so they sought inspiration in the Italian streetscape for their commercial buildings during the early nineteenth century. Sir Charles Barry introduced the Renaissance palazzo style to London with his Traveller's Club (1830-2) and Reform Club (1837-40) in Pall Mall and this was quickly adopted as a suitable style for offices and warehouses. Towards the middle of the century the need was felt for a more flexible style, one which would allow buildings of increased height on costly city sections. Venice, a major commercial centre of the Middle Ages, was looked to and Venetian Gothic houses and palaces became the models for English commercial buildings. The style proved popular for many reasons: it was symbolic of commercial prosperity; the continuous arcades of windows allowed more light into the rooms behind; several storeys could be built without upsetting the proportions; the major building material, brick, was cheap and readily available; and there was more scope for ornamentation. The style was given prominence by two important books published during the 1850s, John Ruskin's *Stones of Venice* (1851-1853) and G. E. Street's *Brick and Marble in the Middle Ages: Notes of Tours in the North of Italy* (1855).

Armson was certainly familiar with both these works. He was also able to keep up-to-date with the latest developments in English architecture from architectural magazines such as *Building News*. Illustrations from architectural journals dating from the 1860s, along with his extensive library, can still be found in the office of Collins, Hunt and Loveridge.

Armson's commercial buildings in Christchurch reflect the wide variety of English models available for imitation. The buildings for Charles Clark (1871), W. Strange and Company (1874), the Christchurch Gas Company (1880) and the New Zealand Shipping Company in Lyttelton (1881) all employ classical motifs, although each building has a distinctive character of its own. Other buildings, including T. J. Maling's (1873), Harman and Stevens's (1877), Fisher's (1880), the New Zealand Loan and Mercantile (1881) and Anderson's (1881), are Venetian Gothic.

Among the commercial buildings, the premises for

Charles Clark had the most richly ornamented of Armson's classical facades. Its two storeys were clearly differentiated. The slightly projecting central portion — capped by a triangular pediment — featured paired columns, Doric at the lower level, Corinthian at the upper, framing the central windows. The shell tympanum motif over the windows of the upper floor, also seen on Strange's Building, is similar to that used by Sir Charles Barry in the garden elevation of his Traveller's Club. Strange's building also makes use of the Serlian or Palladian motif in the second storey windows of the central and end bays, a motif popular with English Palladian architects.

Barry's palazzo style is seen in two of Armson's buildings, Butterworth Brothers (now Harald's in Lichfield Street) and the Borough Hotel (1881) now the Excelsior. Both have three storeys which are clearly expressed on the exterior by the differing treatment of the window frames. Indeed, these window frames provide most of the decorative details on the buildings, though balustrades and rusticated stonework add to the richness of the facades of the Borough Hotel.

The fashion for Venetian Gothic had reached Christchurch before Armson's arrival, for it appears in Mountfort and Bury's New Zealand Trust and Loan Company Building of 1866 in Hereford Street. Although its brick walls are now painted, early photographs show striped voussoirs over the windows in the Venetian manner. T. J. Maling's building in Hereford Street takes the style somewhat further using grouped arcades of windows with striped voussoirs to the pointed arches. By 1877 the building for John Lewis in Hereford Street shows much more assurance and familiarity with the style. As with the palazzo style the three storeys are clearly differentiated by the treatment of the windows. Although the ground floor arcades are similar to those in Maling's Building, much greater decorative richness is seen in the ornamentation. The windows of the third floor of John Lewis's building are very like those of Deane and Woodward's Crown Life Assurance Office (1855-58), the first Venetian Gothic Office Building in London. Armson was certain to have known this building from illustrations in architectural magazines.

The New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Offices and Fisher's Building show an even greater richness of ornamentation. The Loan and Mercantile Building, the grandest of Armson's Italian Gothic designs, even featured Venetian lions on its parapet. Anderson's Building in Cashel Street, now Bell's Arcade, gives the style a somewhat different slant by using round-headed Byzantine style windows and window surrounds, features that are also common in Venice.

Armson had numerous clients among the wealthy business and professional men of Christchurch. Many of the firms for which he built premises were to become well known and respected Christchurch names. Their owners must have found that Armson's work suited their requirements well, since many of his clients had connections with several of the buildings Armson designed. John Anderson (of Anderson's Building) was a director of both the Christchurch Gas Company and the New Zealand Shipping Company for which Armson

designed offices in 1880 and 1881. G. G. Stead, of Royse, Stead and Company, was also connected with the New Zealand Shipping Company. Stead and R. D. Thomas, a client of 1874, were both keen supporters of the Canterbury Jockey Club which commissioned a grandstand from Armson's firm. R. D. Thomas was at one time a partner of T. J. Joynt who also had an office designed by Armson in the 1870s. Undoubtedly, many of Armson's clients would have enjoyed the facilities provided in the grandstand he designed for Lancaster Park in 1881.

The New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Company employed Armson for several buildings; stores at Lyttelton, Durham Street, Christchurch and Ashburton and their grand Venetian Gothic office building in Hereford Street.

Meanwhile, Armson was employed as consulting architect to the Church Property Trustees at a time when much Anglican church building was being carried out. In this capacity he checked the plans for all churches and other ecclesiastical buildings throughout Canterbury, either approving their construction or recommending alterations to the plans. Armson also obtained commissions for buildings in the Diocese. In 1872 he designed the vicarage and a small day-school for forty pupils at St. Mary's, Merivale. Towards the end of his career, he designed St. Mary's Anglican Church, Timaru. As with his commercial work, he followed English precedents for St. Mary's.

By the 1850s, as a result of the writings of A.W.N. Pugin and the Cambridge Camden Society, Gothic, and preferably Middle Pointed Gothic of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, was established as the 'correct' style for new churches.

Armson's cuttings of illustrations from architectural magazines of churches and cathedrals in England, his copies of publications of drawings of Gothic churches from the Oxford Architectural Society, and books ordered from England, such as Pugin's *Examples of Gothic Architecture* (1850) and Bloxam's *The Principles of Gothic Ecclesiastical Architecture* (1843) suggest that he was well aware of Victorian theories of ecclesiastical design. His plan for St. Mary's, Timaru, confirms this. In Oamaru, in 1865, supervising the erection of St. Luke's church to the plans of Rumsey and Jackson, Armson must have gained a practical insight into church planning and ornamentation. Only the nave of St. Mary's was completed to Armson's specifications but this shows the irregular stonework, north porch, pointed windows and steeply pitched roof with open timberwork on the interior favoured by the Ecclesiologists. Debts to St. Luke's can be seen in the rose windows of the clerestory and the broach spire. The apsidal east end and broach spire shown in Armson's drawings remained unbuilt at his death and these were replaced by a square tower and rectangular choir when the church was completed in 1907 by his successors J. J. Collins and R. D. Harman.

No sooner had the Gothic style been universally adopted for Anglican churches than other protestant denominations began to use it for their places of worship. When Armson was asked to design the United Methodist Free Church in St. Asaph Street in 1877 he

used Gothic forms and details on a ground plan quite unlike that of an Anglican Church. (For example, there are no aisles or chancel.) The St. Asaph Street church had a steeply pitched roof, pointed windows and elaborate iron door hinges in the Gothic manner. The external bracing of the tower, which was to house the stairway to the galleries, is similar to that used in some of the early wooden churches in New Zealand designed by Frederick Thatcher and Benjamin Mountfort. The spire, with its pavilion roof and cresting, can be compared with the tower of Mountfort's Canterbury Museum.

Another weatherboard building with similar Gothic details was the St. Alban's School, built in 1874. In England, throughout most of the nineteenth century, the church played an active part in education, parish schools being the most important providers of elementary education. Because of the close association of the school with the church, schools also tended to be Gothic in style. Armson designed four substantial school buildings in Christchurch, the Lyttelton Borough School (1873), the St. Albans School (1874), Christchurch Boys' High School (1879) and Christchurch Girls' High School (1880). Although these were not administered by the church, Gothic was still the favoured style as it was for other secular educational buildings of the time in Christchurch, such as S. C. Farr's Normal School (1876) and Thomas Cane's Girls' High School (1876). As with most other building types, architects in Canterbury followed English precedents when designing schools.

The Lyttelton Borough School was of red brick with the bands of contrasting colour we associate with Armson's Venetian Gothic office buildings. At the time of its opening in January 1875, the *Lyttelton Times* reported that "the town had gained no inconsiderable advantage from the outwards appearance of the buildings." In keeping with educational practices of the day, boys and girls were taught in separate classrooms. This practice is also apparent in Farr's Normal School where separate blocks were provided to accommodate the sexes.

A tower and belfry mark the principal entrance of the Lyttelton Borough School and add to the picturesque outline of the building. The round window with a six-pointed star, symbolising wisdom, is a motif seen in the new school at Walthamstow, Essex, by W. Wigginton, an engraving of which Armson had cut from *The Building News* of 31st August 1866. He also used this type of window in the United Methodist Free Church. Christchurch Girls' High School features many of the same details as the Lyttelton Borough School. It is of brick with striped voussoirs over the windows and has a picturesque outline. In both these schools the main doorway is capped by a gable giving it an ecclesiastical appearance.

Both Armson and Thomas Cane were invited to submit plans for the Boys' High School to be built in Worcester Street. Armson's substantial building with its

arcaded entranceway, picturesque tower and steeply pitched gables was chosen.

Another of Armson's major commissions in Christchurch was the Public Library — two sets of his drawings for this building are extant. The first, for a two-storied building with a pavilion roof and an elaborate stone facade, proved too costly for the resources available. The second set shows the Library as it was built, with a timber corridor linking it to the first Christchurch Library, Samuel Farr's Mechanics' Institute of 1863. The Board of Governors of Canterbury College wanted permanent materials to be used, so red brick was employed with bands of glazed black brick. The front elevation, although very simple, is striking in its use of a group of three pointed windows with striped voussoirs flanked by single windows of a similar design.

Armson designed a number of houses in and around Christchurch. Unfortunately few of these can be identified today, but at least one, Dr Chapman's house at Leeston, built in 1877, is still standing. Constructed of timber with simple pierced bargeboards, a verandah along two sides, and a projecting wing with bay window to the right, the Chapman house shows many of the features of the colonial house common in New Zealand last century.

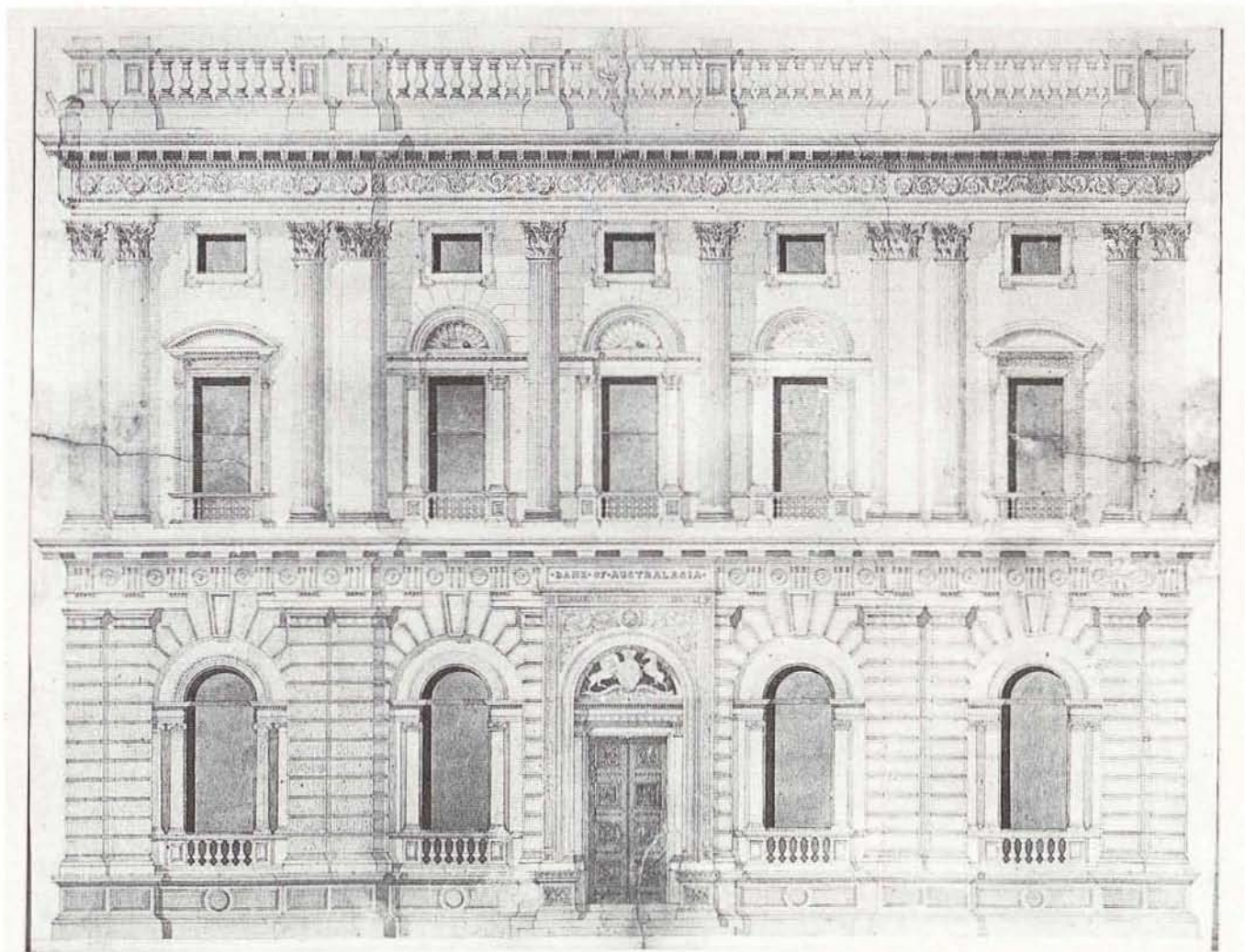
The record of Armson's contracts in Christchurch shows that his practice was extensive. After just over a decade in Christchurch he had transformed the appearance of the commercial heart of the city. Hereford Street must have looked particularly fine with no fewer than twelve buildings erected to Armson's design between Oxford Terrace and Manchester Street.

Unfortunately, few of Armson's buildings still stand. Of all those in Hereford Street the sole survivor is the striking Venetian Gothic Fisher's Building on the southeast corner of Hereford and High Streets.

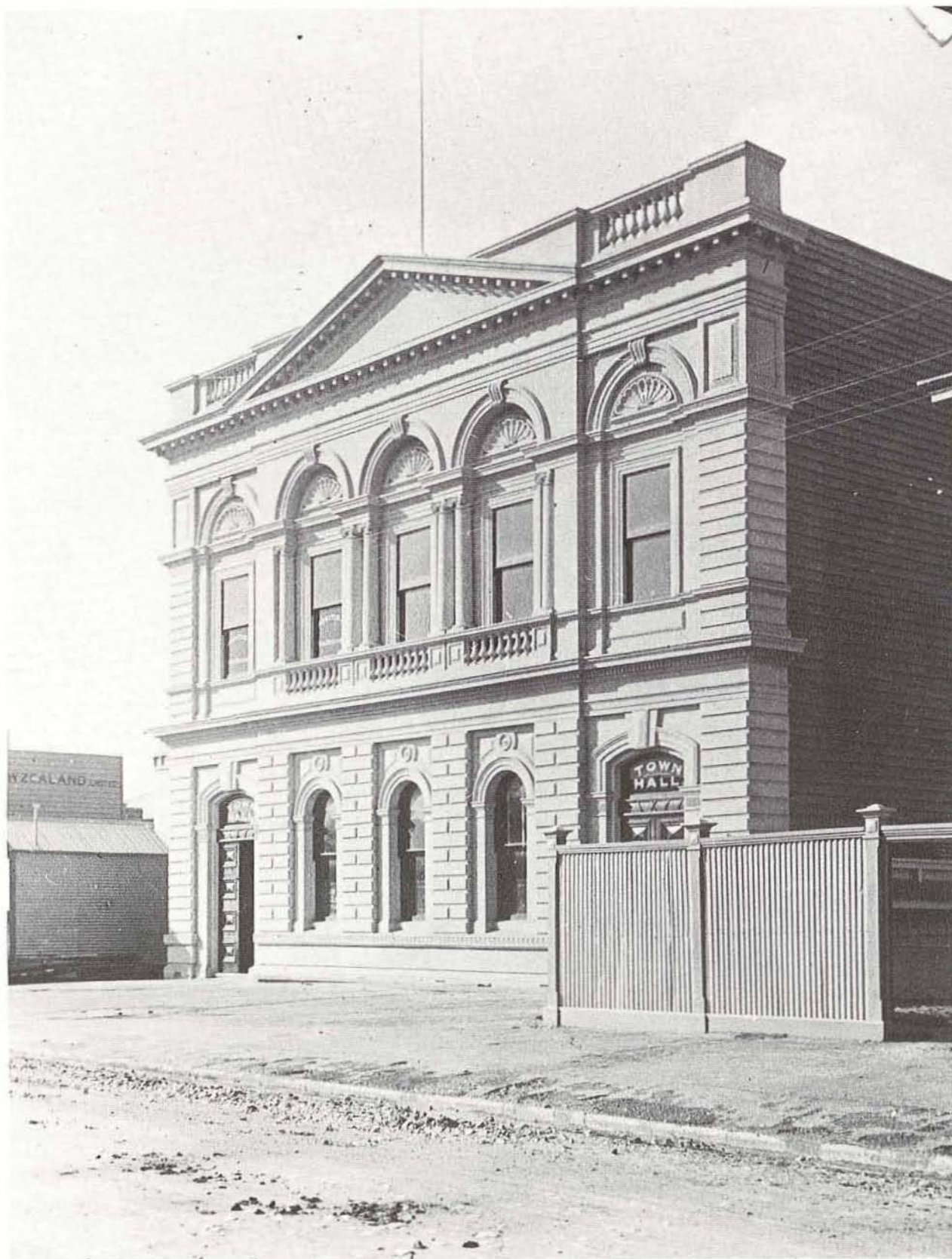
The growth of Christchurch's commercial sector has led to the loss of Armson's buildings while Mountfort's public buildings still stand. As a result, Armson's reputation has diminished along with the number of his surviving buildings. Nevertheless, the evidence of his drawings, of early photographs and of those buildings still standing clearly demonstrates that Armson was one of the two outstanding architects working in nineteenth-century Christchurch. Armson's contemporaries had no doubt about his merits as an architect. The *Press* of Wednesday, 28th February 1883 paid this tribute to Armson shortly after his death:

Mr William Barnett Armson, an old and esteemed colonist, has passed from among us, and a widespread circle of friends will by this time have learnt with much sorrow that so promising a career has been brought to a premature close . . .

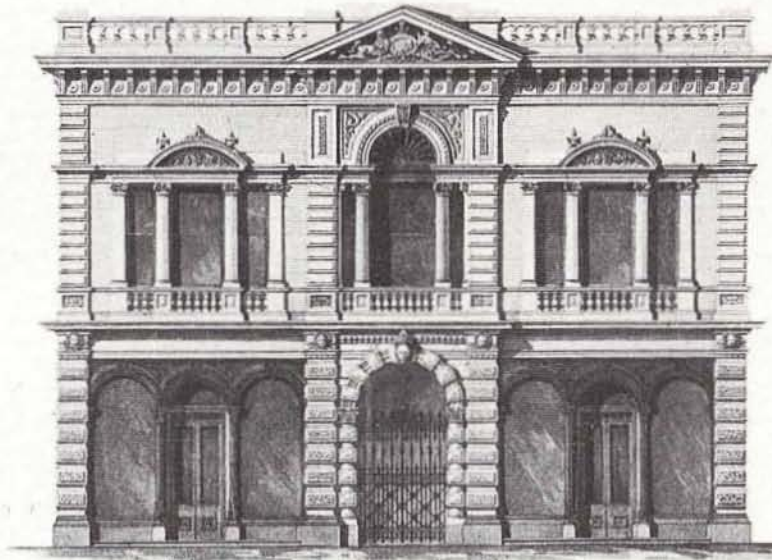
He may fairly be said to have occupied the first position as an architect in this colony. Dunedin, Auckland, Oamaru, Hokitika, Lyttelton, Christchurch and many other towns bear evidence of his skill as an architect, but one of his latest and most successful designs is that of the Bank of New Zealand in Dunedin, a building admitted to be one of the most perfect of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere. He was a man of considerable culture, a loyal friend and a high minded and honourable gentleman.



FRONT ELEVATION, BANK OF AUSTRALASIA, MELBOURNE, CA. 1860-61 (cat. no. 2).



TOWN HALL, HOKITIKA, 1869 (photo. West Coast Historical Museum, Hokitika).



FRONT ELEVATION

SCALE FOUR FEET TO ONE INCH

*W. B. Harrison
Christchurch
12/12/70*

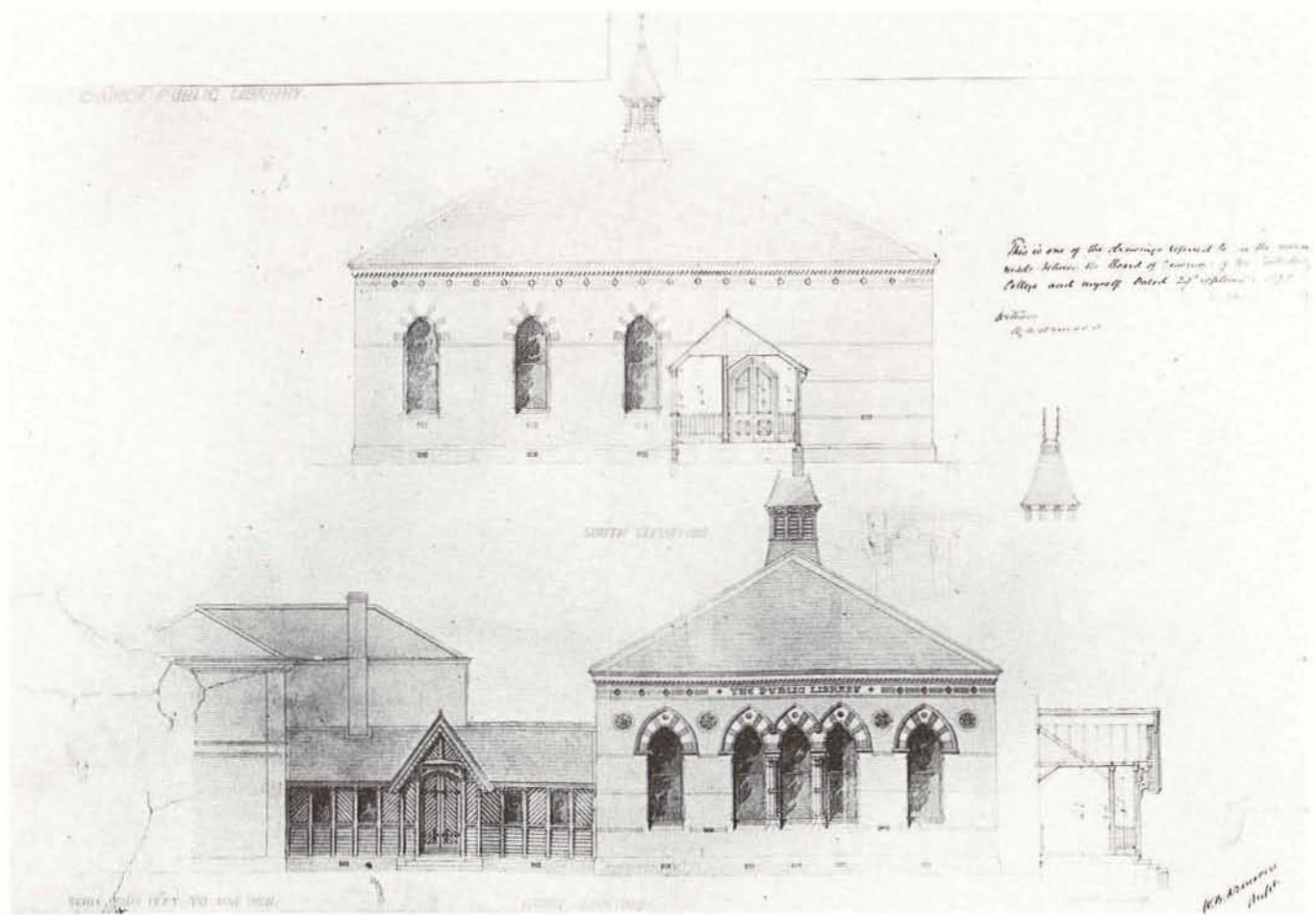
DESIGN FOR THEATRE, SHOPS AND OFFICES, CHRISTCHURCH, 1870 (cat. no. 5).



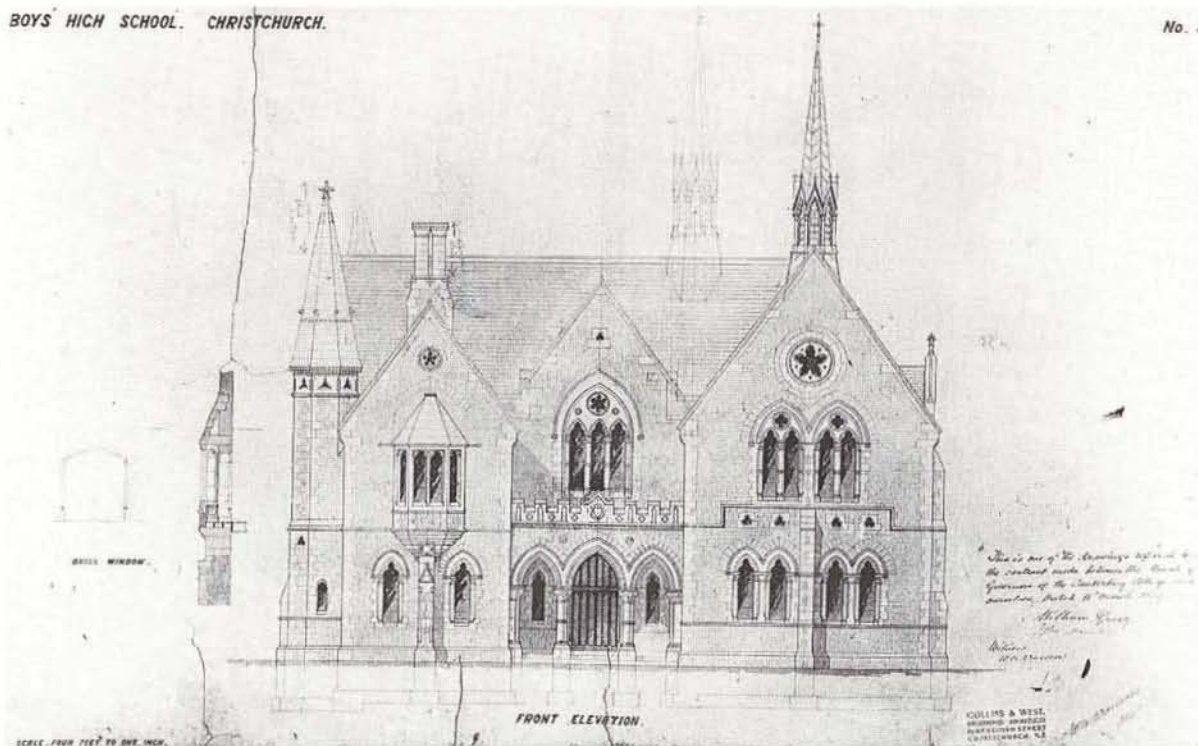
LYTTELTON BOROUGH SCHOOL, 1873-75 (cat. no. 8).



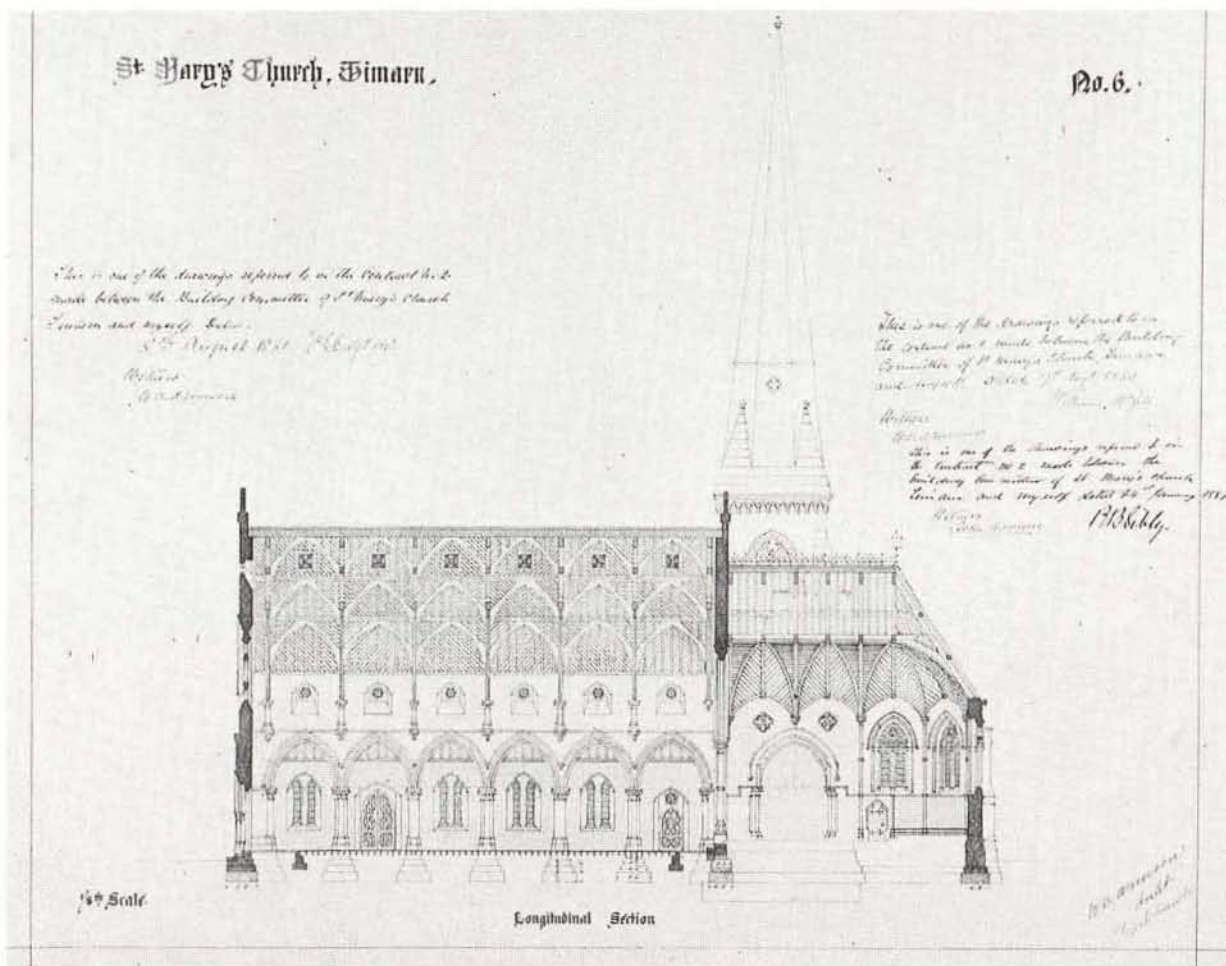
STRANGE'S BUILDING, HIGH STREET, CHRISTCHURCH, 1874 (cat. no. 9).



FRONT AND SOUTH ELEVATIONS, (FORMER) PUBLIC LIBRARY, CHRISTCHURCH, 1874 (cat. no. 11).



FRONT ELEVATION, (FORMER) BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL, WORCESTER STREET, CHRISTCHURCH, 1879 (cat. no. 17).



LONGITUDINAL SECTION, ST. MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, TIMARU, 1880 (cat. no. 29).



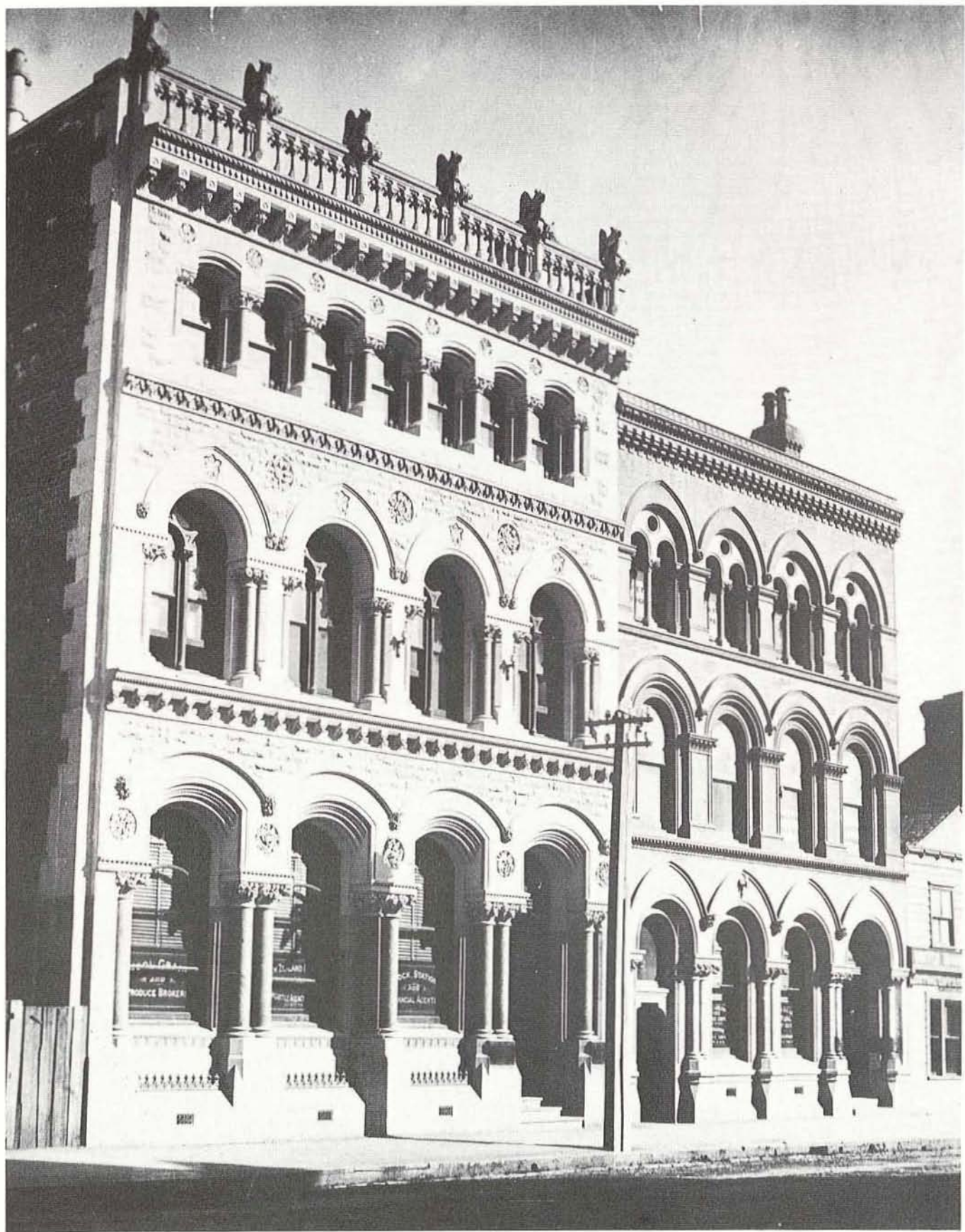
BANK OF NEW ZEALAND, RAKAIA, 1881 (photo. B.N.Z. Archives).



UNION BANK, HEREFORD STREET, CHRISTCHURCH, 1882.



BANK OF NEW ZEALAND, ASHBURTON, 1881 (photo. B.N.Z. Archives).



NEW ZEALAND LOAN AND MERCANTILE BUILDING, 1881 (left), AND
OFFICES FOR J. LEWIS, HEREFORD STREET, 1877 (cat. no. 13).

ARMSON AND BANK ARCHITECTURE

Although Armson's architectural achievements extended over a wide range of building types, from cottages to churches, his designs for trading banks formed a particularly impressive group. Amongst his contemporaries no other architect in New Zealand received so many important bank commissions so far afield. In fact, his earliest known drawings, dating from 1861, were designs for banks in Melbourne. His New Zealand bank contracts — for the Bank of New Zealand, the Bank of New South Wales, the Union Bank of Australia, the Bank of Australasia, the Colonial Bank and the National Bank — cover the whole period from 1866 until his death in 1883. They ranged in design from simple timber structures such as the Bank of New Zealand, Temuka (1875) to the elaborate masonry construction of his masterpiece, the Bank of New Zealand, Dunedin (1879), "a building admitted to be one of the most perfect of its kind in the Southern Hemisphere."¹ While Armson was "well trained to design in both pure Classic or the Gothic style, Armson's personal preference was for the Classic style and this is reflected in his bank architecture"² In fact, it could hardly have been otherwise for in designing banks in the classical and Renaissance styles he was merely following British precedent in expressing the idea of industry and commerce through what were considered to be the most appropriate and evocative historical styles.

The first industrial age in the eighteenth century gave rise to modern commerce but it was not until the nineteenth century that this became identified with the ideology of free enterprise. During this period the modern concept of banking evolved to meet the increasing need for financial organisation in the commercial arena. An integral part of the burgeoning industrial scene was the expansion of banking facilities, and branch banks became necessary to cope with a rapidly increasing demand.

While Scotland had benefitted from independent and competitive banking systems since the eighteenth century, it was not until 1833, after the 1826 and 1833 Joint Stock Bank Legislation had been passed, that the monopoly of the Bank of England, formed in 1694, was finally broken, and Joint Stock Trading Companies could be established as banking institutions. For the first of these — the London and Westminster Bank, established in 1833 — Charles Robert Cockerell (1788–1863) was commissioned to design a head office building in London. Cockerell was an advocate of the Neo-classical style and after he became architect for the Bank of England in the same year, 1833, his particular blend of Romantic Classicism greatly influenced bank architecture throughout the British Empire.

Victorian architects believed that all styles of architecture possible had already been invented and therefore drew upon the historical past for inspiration. This was especially true of bank architecture and the choice of

style was influenced by several factors. First, classicism was already established as an appropriate style for banks in the north — Archibald Elliott II's Royal Bank of Scotland in Glasgow of 1827, with its pedimented Ionic portico, for example; second, Cockerell's bank designs in the classical mode provided a precedent in England; and third, the wealthy capitalists, identifying themselves with Renaissance merchant princes, favoured Italianate styles for their banks. The Renaissance palazzo became, therefore, an especially favoured model for modern banks.

Thus the classical style with Renaissance variations, adapted to accommodate new functions, became synonymous with bank architecture. Its solidity evoked dignity, stability, and security — the more imposing and splendid the facade, and the greater the concentration of ornament, the more convincing the impression of power and wealth.

As an architect for banks, then, Armson followed the accepted mode of his time which sat comfortably with his preference for the classical style. His bank contracts in New Zealand ranged from elaborate masonry structures in the cities to smaller versions of these for towns, and more modest wooden buildings designed for country branches. His bank designs, therefore, reflect variations in geographical position and degrees of importance as well as the availability of materials and economic constraints. The variation of styles and designs to accommodate these factors attest to Armson's ability to adapt to indigenous materials, and translate the Victorian concept of bank architecture into the colonial environment. While his earliest commissions were carried out on the West Coast and he designed banks for towns and cities through New Zealand, the greatest concentration was found in Canterbury. A detailed examination of a representative group of his Canterbury banks will serve to illustrate Armson's approach to bank architecture in general.

The earliest of Armson's country banks in the region was the Temuka branch of the Bank of New Zealand, built in 1875. A simple classical building, of timber construction, it is square in plan with a hipped roof. A small, central, columned portico supporting a plain entablature marks the entrance, while a balustrade at the roof line completes the facade. The pilasters flanking the central arched widow above the portico repeats the motif of those flanking the doorway. The windows on the front elevation are a simplified rendering of Renaissance style windows, whilst those on the side walls are rectangular and plain. As they are almost flush with the wall they lend a flattened look to the building. This contrasts strongly with the deep shadows of the portico which emphasise the entrance. The corners of the facade are given emphasis by the wooden blocks nailed on to the weatherboards to resemble stone

quoins. Although essentially a simple, box-like structure, adequate to meet the needs of a small town, the classical elements incorporated in the design clearly identified the building as a bank.

Armson's experience in the use of timber for the superstructure of his country banks clearly matured, and, by 1881, in his design for the Bank of New Zealand at Rakaia, the architecture is more sophisticated and elaborate. It is similar in style to public houses of the period and was known to locals as the "dry-pub."³ Italianate in style, the symmetrical structure with hipped roof incorporates an enclosed porch topped by a pediment. The round-headed windows, framed by rectangular surrounds, introduce a play of light and shadow not apparent in the flattened appearance of the Temuka building. The windows were designed to give the impression of decreasing strength toward the top — a typical Renaissance device. The verticality of the corner members, the window surrounds and porch decoration, are balanced by the strong horizontal lines of the weatherboards. The horizontality is emphasised by the three projecting bands of timber forming string courses above and below the windows. These were originally painted a darker colour than the weatherboards, thus translating the structural polychromy of a stone or brick building into painted wood.

For the Bank of New Zealand at Geraldine of 1883, another wooden structure, Armson again employed the classical style but the arched doorway and capped rectangular windows were borrowed from the Renaissance architectural vocabulary. The verticality of the Doric pilasters of the enclosed porch and those at the corners of the building contrast with the horizontal lines of the heavy timbering of the entablature. This effect played down the lines of the weatherboard cladding to strengthen the illusion of a masonry building and thereby gave it more solidity.

Armson's Bank of New Zealand at Ashburton of 1881 was similar to the country banks already discussed but of masonry construction. The Ashburton Bank, however, was more severe in style with solidity being the keynote. This was emphasised by the dominating, central, columned portico. Doric columns rose from their bases to support a pediment which was superimposed upon the deep, solid entablature. The arched entrance and windows, with delicately decorated spandrels, relieved the austerity of the Doric order.

Armson's design for the Bank of New Zealand at Lyttelton of 1878, was, as befitted a bank in the province's principal port, more imposing than the town branch at Ashburton. It was a two-storied, stuccoed brick structure, the rusticated ground floor with rusticated pilasters flanking the arched windows and entrance contrasting with the Ionic columns and Renaissance windows of the first floor. The use of the Ionic order allowed for more decoration than the Doric and this was evident in the carved consoles and decorative balustrading on the facade. The entrance was capped by a pediment under which a carved lion's head decorated the keystone. The lion motif was repeated in the keystones of the windows on the facade, on the side elevation, as well as at each corner of the pediment. Rusticated stone quoins completed the facade.

Of the five Canterbury banks discussed, only those at Temuka and Rakaia still stand, and of these only the Rakaia branch continues to serve its original purpose.

In Christchurch, Hereford Street became known as "the Lombard Street of the city."⁴ The fact that several banks faced onto Hereford Street gave rise to the occasional conundrum; for example, the *Canterbury Punch* of 6th May 1865, asked "which is the most hilly street in Christchurch?" Answer: "Hereford Street, on account of its banks." Armson designed three banks in Hereford Street — the Colonial Bank in 1878, the Union Bank in 1882, and the National Bank in 1883. All three displayed the impressive facades associated with city banks. Competition between banks was intense and the more impressive the edifice the greater the opportunity to attract custom.

The Colonial Bank, designed the same year as the Lyttelton Bank, shared a similarity in symmetry, style, and size, but the facade of the Colonial Bank was more elaborate. Emphasis on the central entrance was increased by the placing of paired Doric columns and pillars, solidly mounted on large stone pedestals, on either side of the entrance. On the first floor Armson employed a series of three Palladian windows, the central bay being emphasised by paired Ionic pilasters. The building was topped with an entablature bearing a balustrade. This motif was repeated between the ground and first floors where the balustrade forms a series of shallow balconies.

Armson's design for the Union Bank was for a larger building — five bays compared to the three of the Colonial Bank. The rusticated arcading gained more emphasis by being repeated over five bays, each window was flanked by double pilasters while the building was terminated by rusticated pillars at the corners. Paired Corinthian columns on the upper floor repeated the pattern of the ground floor but with the corners finished in matching Corinthian pilasters. Decorated entablatures crowned both floors, the upper level finishing with a balustrade. The addition of balusters beneath the three central upper windows, and Corinthian half columns supporting the window arches gave emphasis to the central section of the facade as well as enriching the decorative scheme. The repetition of the paired columns and arched windows on both floors blended a harmonious rhythm with a strong play of light and shade. Of Armson's Christchurch banks, the Union Bank was undoubtedly the finest.

Also in Hereford Street was the National Bank building. This building deserves special mention for Armson not only employed brick for the superstructure but incorporated other materials to harmonise in colour and texture. Of Venetian Renaissance style, this bank was clearly differentiated from the others in the street, and therein lay its impact. The basement level was built in Port Chalmers bluestone. The white Oamaru stone of the quoins, entrance and window surrounds added further colour and contrasted with the red of the brick walls. The use of different materials for colour and texture variation provided subtle decoration. Further decoration was apparent in the treatment of window surrounds, and the building was finished at the roofline

with a patterned moulding and decorative brackets under the eaves.

Along with most of Armson's other buildings in Hereford Street, these three banks have been demolished, the National Bank as recently as 1982.

A major commission for a further Bank of New Zealand was awarded to Armson in 1879. This was for a building on the corner of Princes and Rattray Streets, Dunedin, and although it was not completed until after his death in 1883, this structure was the most costly and ambitious of all Armson's bank contracts. Already conscious of his failing health, Armson intended to erect it as a monument to himself and he made it clear that economic restrictions would not be tolerated.⁵ When signing the contract the general manager of the bank is reported to have said,

'I want you to clearly understand, Mr Armson, that there are to be no extras on this contract, not one penny of extras.' Armson replied, 'Mr _____, if I consider extras are required and justified, I shall order them, and the Bank will pay for them.'⁶

The building did exceed the contract price of £26,046, the final cost being somewhat over £30,000!

The *Illustrated New Zealand Herald* reported on 20th April 1882, that

the new Bank of New Zealand, occupying as it does, the most commanding position at the corner of Princes and Rattray Streets, is now completed, so far as the external portion is concerned, and is about the best building in the city, if not in the Colony. As a combination of the various styles of architecture, it has a certain appearance of massiveness, combined with beauty and richness of design, seldom so successfully brought out in a building of such extensive dimensions.

Late in 1890, Alex Bathgate wrote of the building — ". . . for purity and richness of design after its kind, as a piece of street architecture, [it] stands unrivalled."⁷

The construction of the building was undertaken by James Gore, of Dunedin, with supervision by James Armstrong. Armson was at this time living in Christchurch but made frequent journeys to Dunedin to visit the site. The drawings and specifications were executed in very great detail for the time. Therefore, when Gore wrote to Armson to suggest that the specifications did not include sufficient stone for columns indicated on the plans, Armson replied with barely disguised indignation:

I have to direct your attention to the plans where the stone is shown jointed in the manner I require and drawn of the necessary dimensions. The portion of the specification you quote refers to columns generally, but the plan shows the special method of jointing the cornerstone. As I pointed this out to you in Dunedin, I am surprised that you again raise this question.⁸

In his brief, lucid, correspondence with the contractor he was able to dispel all misinterpretations.

Armson exploited the commanding position of the site with imposing facades on both Princes and Rattray Streets. The Banking Chamber, 16.06 by 15.45 metres and 7.27 metres high, lighted with windows on two sides, is entered through a vestibule from Princes Street. The style of the building is Italian Renaissance and incorporates into the design distinctive and intricately carved embellishments. The use of varying materials for

colour and texture adds a more subtle form of decoration. The rusticated basement of Port Chalmers bluestone is surmounted by a pedestal of hard sandstone of a light brown colour. The superstructure is of Oamaru stone, and polished, grey granite, Ionic half columns flank the ground floor windows.

The two floors of Oamaru stone superstructure have five bays on each facade with an order of engaged columns on both levels. The end bays of each facade are given added emphasis through the use of paired columns, producing a more convincing impression of solidity and mass. On the ground floor the columns frame round-headed windows, while on the upper floor square-headed windows capped with segmental pediments are employed. The upper storey is finished with a large crowning entablature and consoles proportioned to the height of the whole building and surmounted by a balustrade.

In addition to the bank chamber the interior consisted of rooms to accommodate the manager's office and apartment, offices for the accountant and for general purposes. There was also a waiting room and a vestibule. In the basement, where the walls are 1.89 metres thick, there were the usual strong room facilities and also smelting and assaying rooms, originally built to handle the gold trade of the province. There was, too, allowance for a boilerhouse containing apparatus for heating the building, and messengers' rooms fitted with electric bells. At the back part of the basement, an hydraulic lift to the various floors of the building and a coal shoot were provided.

The *Illustrated New Zealand Herald* on 20th April 1882, reported that the

interior of the building will be fitted up in the most elaborate style, and this work alone will probably occupy about eight months, as the marble flagging and mantlepieces have yet to arrive from home, and most of the furniture has to be prepared. The frieze and flowering work of the ceiling is being most beautifully executed. Cedar dado lining will be laid along the staircases, and these will also have heavy handrails and iron balusters. The whole of the doors and windows at the back are fitted with iron shutters.

The richly carved cedar fittings in the bank chamber, now no longer in place, were dominated by the coffered Renaissance style ceiling. However, an individual note was struck in the frieze made up of English roses alternating with Scottish thistles.

The Bank of New Zealand in Dunedin realised Armson's dream of creating a lasting monument to himself and in this work he was able to realise the ideals he had set himself twenty-two years earlier in his Melbourne bank designs. Even though the building has subsequently lost its staircase, chimneys, balusters and parapet, it remains a tribute to Armson's architectural ability.

Throughout all his bank commissions Armson was successful in blending the classical elements of symmetry, simplicity and order with the varied requirements of each commission. His later banks reflected the Victorians' increasing penchant for lavish ornament as well as their continuing attachment to the classical and Renaissance styles. Armson's genius lay not in the invention of a particular style but in his ability to modify

and adapt a variety of styles and designs to accommodate his clients' requirements. His country branch banks, although only wooden structures with relatively simple decoration, nevertheless possessed a dignity in keeping with their function. The town banks tended to

be smaller versions of their larger city counterparts. Finally, the grander and more elaborate banks of the cities gave Armson the opportunity to exploit his very considerable architectural skills to their full.



(1) *Press*. Christchurch, 28th February 1883.

(2) [J. K. Collins], *A Century of Architecture*. Christchurch, 1965, p. 15.

(3) R. H. Griffin, "Victorian Bank Architecture in New Zealand," A paper delivered to the Australasian Victorian Studies Association on 26th January 1982, p. 21.

(4) *Press*. 30th July 1872.

(5) Collins, p. 16.

(6) *Ibid.* p. 15.

(7) Alex Bathgate, ed., *Picturesque Dunedin*. Dunedin, 1890, p. 134.

(8) *W. B. Armson Letterbook*. 10th September 1880, p. 204. In possession of Collins, Hunt and Loveridge, Christchurch.



ARMSON AND THE ARCHITECTURAL PROFESSION

In all his dealings as an architect Armson was uncompromisingly professional and this is perhaps the most enduring aspect of his contribution to Christchurch architecture.

Although fully qualified architects were among the immigrants who disembarked at Lyttelton in 1850 and 1851, they tended to be regarded as "the black sheep of the liberal professions in the early days of the Canterbury Settlement."¹ Recognition of architecture as a profession was grudgingly conceded in New Zealand, and it was more than twenty years before the practise of architecture in Christchurch was placed on a completely professional footing with the foundation, in 1872, of the Canterbury Association of Architects, the first organisation of its kind in the country. The Scale of Charges published by the Association was signed by the four original members — B. W. Mountfort, W. B. Armson, Alexander Lean and Frederick Strouts. While Mountfort's signature heads the list (as the inaugural president) it seems likely that Armson, recently arrived in Christchurch, was the prime mover in the formation of the group.

During the previous two-and-a-half centuries the architect's status had undergone a number of changes. Ingio Jones, as Surveyor of the King's Works to James I and then Charles I, was the first architect in England who was not primarily a builder but a designer of buildings. Prior to Jones the traditional system of Surveyors as supervisors of artisans and craftsmen had been in operation. From the inception of the Royal Academy in 1768, architecture was accorded its rightful place among the Fine Arts, and the honorary position of Professor of Architecture, which involved no duty more onerous than an annual lecture, was established. Meanwhile, various branches of architecture, such as civil engineering and surveying, began to separate off into independent specializations. In order to cope with the increasing complexity of their profession, architects banded together in an effort to establish uniformity of practice and maintain standards, thus achieving parity with other "closed" professions such as medicine or law. The [Royal] Institute of British Architects, founded in 1834, was the first such association in Britain. Formal courses of instruction were introduced at King's College, London, in 1840, and University College, London, in 1841. The Architectural Association, founded in 1845, opened a school two years later. Periodicals such as *The Architectural Magazine* (1834), and *The Civil Engineer and Architect's Journal* (1837) were widely circulated and copies of *The Builder* (1843) found their way to the Colonies at a very early date. However, these developments in architectural professionalism were not without some opposition, not only from among the architects themselves, but also from the general public who viewed with suspicion the architects' claims for higher status and the charges which accompanied them. Never-

theless, by the end of the nineteenth century architects had attained a position "secure and respected in the Victorian social hierarchy."²

The architect's more difficult position in colonial New Zealand was complicated by such factors as uncertain economic conditions, unreliable workmanship, shortages of materials, and isolation.

The structural failure of a number of early buildings in Canterbury led to widespread distrust of the profession as a whole. Mountfort was one of the early victims of these difficulties since his first substantial building in Canterbury, Holy Trinity Church in Lyttelton (1852), had to be demolished only two years after it was built because timber used in its construction was not properly seasoned. Ten years later, when he applied for the position of supervising architect of Christchurch Cathedral, Bishop Harper expressed a widely held view when he claimed that "our public buildings have been with some slight exceptions, failures alike in good taste and strength of construction."³ The Cathedral Commission's rejection of Mountfort's services and their insistence that a supervising architect be sent from England was viewed by local architects as "a great slight, if not a positive injustice" to the profession in the Province.⁴ They considered that the low standing in which the architectural profession was held in Canterbury would provide little incentive for a well-trained architect to emigrate to the colony.

If we know of any gentleman of ability intending to settle among us, probably the most charitable course we could take would be to inform him of the very low estimation in which the profession seems to be held here, [architects] being regarded by the majority of the public as little better than carpenters, and the profession as anything but honourable and gentlemanly.⁵

As late as 1877 the editor of *The Building News* warned young architects that prospects for employment in New Zealand were far from certain, stating that "well educated architects are not required there yet."⁶

The suspicions of the public were not, however, without some foundation. During the nineteenth century anyone could describe himself as an architect whether or not he had served the usual four year training period articulated to a master. Although many architects working in colonial New Zealand, including both Mountfort and Armson, had received a thorough training, many who claimed to be architects had simply "picked up" their craft while working as builders. There was, as a result, little consistency in professional standards. Similarly the nature of the architect's role and the relationship between architect and client were ill-defined, a situation which inevitably led to misunderstanding and suspicion. To make matters worse, the taste of those commissioning buildings was often conservative, and not suprisingly at odds with the more advanced notions of the architects themselves. As early as 1862 the *Press* complained of the "uneducated and ignorant men" sitting on competition committees, who

were unable to appreciate the "lofty designs" of the architect.⁷

The formation of the Canterbury Association of Architects was almost certainly a response to this far from satisfactory situation. Armson's presence in Christchurch and his thorough-going commitment to the profession of architecture may well have acted as a catalyst in the formation of the C.A.A. As an articled pupil in the office of Purchas and Swyer in Melbourne, Armson would have had first-hand knowledge of the Victorian Institute of Architects, founded in 1856, since Swyer was the Institute's treasurer and Purchas was a council member. He would thus have been well aware of the value of such a professional association. In 1871 the Christchurch architects met to complain about local byelaws and made their protest in the form of a letter to the City Council reported in the *Lyttelton Times* on 22nd August. This joint statement no doubt made obvious the advantages of collective action and can be seen as an important step towards the formation of a professional body.

Very little is known about the C.A.A. as few records have survived. There is even some confusion over the date of its foundation: J. K. Collins gives the date as 1871 while C. J. Mountfort states that it was 1872.⁹ Membership was limited to architects who had been in practice for at least three years and who had trained for a minimum of four years as articled pupils to qualified architects.¹⁰ These strict requirements excluded a number of well-known local architects, including S. C. Farr. In comparison, the Victorian Institute of Architects only required intending members to have practised locally for one year¹¹ while in Britain it was only in 1882 that a diploma, granted on completion of an apprenticeship, was considered a prerequisite for membership of the R.I.B.A.

The C.A.A. was also more exclusive in its membership than other professional associations established in New Zealand later in the century. In Dunedin, the Otago Association of Architects, Engineers and Surveyors was established in 1876, primarily to combat the encroachment of Government employees on professional practice.¹² The Wellington Institute of Architects and Civil Engineers, founded in 1883, seems to have existed mainly for social reasons.¹³ Of these groups, only the C.A.A. limited membership to architects alone. It thus emerges as the earliest attempt in this country to make a distinction between "qualified" and "unqualified" architects and to establish uniform standards of practice.

One area of particular concern to the C.A.A. was the establishment of a standard scale of charges. One of the Association's first acts was to publish a Scale of Charges for distribution to clients or prospective clients. It is closely modelled on the professional charges laid down by the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1862 and was the most detailed and thorough scale of charges in use in this country before the foundation of the New Zealand Institute of Architects in 1905.¹⁴ Although the Otago Association produced a scale of charges, it was much less precise than the C.A.A.'s scale, and left more to the discretion of individual architects.¹⁵

In another area of professional practice, over the

ownership of drawings, the C.A.A. took an even firmer line than the R.I.B.A. The R.I.B.A.'s regulations stated that since no legal ruling had been given on this question, architects should "have a distinct understanding with [their employers] on this point." However, the C.A.A.'s regulations stated quite unequivocally that "the drawings and specifications . . . being merely the Architect's means of procedure, remain his property, and . . . he is paid for the use of them only." This regulation was successfully tested in the Courts in 1876 when Frederick Strouts brought an action against a client who declined to pay his fee. The client had commissioned drawings for a house which he then decided not to build, but refused to reimburse the architect unless he received the plans. Strouts presumably presented the Scale of Charges to the Court as the report on the case observed that "evidence was given to show that it was the custom for architects, both in England and elsewhere, to keep their plans."¹⁶ Having won the case, Strouts handed over the plans to the client, explaining that he merely "brought the action for the purpose of establishing a right."

Armson was equally insistent over the architect's right to the ownership of plans. When relations with the Building Committee of St. Mary's, Timaru, deteriorated in 1883, the Committee refused to pay him unless he "surrender the plans of the Church."¹⁷ Armson refused to do so unless paid an additional £300 for the plans. As these remain in the office of Collins, Hunt and Loveridge, it seems that he won his point.

Shortly after its foundation the C.C.A. became involved in a public dispute over the competition for the new Christchurch Public Library. Armson won the competition to design the Library in 1874 but the other entrants complained that he had been given extra time to finish his plans. Alexander Lean, as President of the C.A.A., wrote to the Board of Governors of Canterbury College and "without expressing censure on the committee or the architect . . ." involved, claimed that the Committee had acted in an "irregular" manner and that their actions were "contrary to the conditions furnished to the competitors."¹⁸ Criticism of the Library Committee soon developed into condemnation of the C.A.A. One correspondent wrote to the *Lyttelton Times* claiming that the C.A.A. was "shielding the actions of their confrere"¹⁹ while Farr wrote saying "if Associations cannot act honourably towards one another, I fail to see what benefit arises from such a society." He added "I am not a member, nor do I regret it. . . ."²⁰

Lean replied to Farr's criticisms, explaining that the Association had discussed the competition and taken the action it considered appropriate. He also reiterated the aims and objectives of the Association and pointed out that Farr had no choice but to remain outside the C.A.A. as he did not qualify for membership.²¹

The C.A.A. again found itself defending the rights of its members in 1875 when a further incident occurred over the Public Library. Armson was asked to submit new plans for a more modest building, whereupon he presented the Canterbury College Library Committee with an account of £278 for his work on the first set of plans. The Committee expressed concern when the

architect refused to lower his charge "on the ground that it is according to the scale of charges agreed to by the Canterbury Association of Architects."²² The Committee applied to the Association for clarification and Lean, who was still President, staunchly defended Armson's claim. He informed the Library Committee that the Association's charges were "literally a transcript of those of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and this notwithstanding that local circumstances would in equity warrant a considerable increase over the English fees."²³ The issue in question was the architect's right to determine what was an appropriate charge for professional services. In an earlier letter to the Library Committee, Armson made this point quite clear. "It is almost needless to remark that the time required for a work of design cannot be computed by any but those who are actually engaged in it . . . it is as competent for an Association of Architects to frame its scale of charges as for a Chamber of Commerce. . . ."²⁴

It is clear from these incidents that Armson and the other members of the C.A.A. took their claims of professional status seriously and were ready to defend their stance in the face of a sceptical and sometimes antagonistic public. Yet in spite of its very considerable achievements, the C.A.A. seems to have lapsed in the early 1880s. In June 1881 T. S. [Lambert?] claimed that as the Surveyors' Association had recently been founded, the architects of New Zealand should also form an association for their "mutual protection."²⁵ Another architect, presumably W. H. Espenett, complained that the "excessively low charges and incompetent practice of Tom, Dick and Harry" undermined the reputation of architects in general. He also stated that the C.A.A. "broke down miserably . . . through want of firmness in some of its members."²⁶

Although the C.A.A.'s life was relatively short it was nevertheless the forerunner of other architectural associations from which the N.Z.I.A. eventually emerged in 1905. Among the members of the C.A.A. Armson certainly could not be accused of "want of firmness" and he continued to use the scale of charges in his dealings with clients until his death in 1883.

Armson's concern with professional standards, so apparent in his involvement with the C.A.A., is equally evident in the way he conducted his own practice. J. J. Collins, his apprentice from 1871, recalled that Armson was "afraid of no-one, and meticulous about his professional standing."²⁷ He resolutely refused to lower his charges, despite the entreaties of some clients. "I cannot", he wrote to Archdeacon Harper in 1877, "depart from this honourable custom of my profession."²⁸ When another client complained that "Mr _____" only charged four-and-a-half percent commission instead of the usual five, Armson replied "Mr _____, is, no doubt, the best judge of the value of his own work."²⁹

Armson was a most accomplished and sensitive draughtsman, and his documentation was meticulous. His drawings and specifications were precise and highly detailed, and he would allow no deviation from them whatsoever. The conditions of contract, unusually for this period, were printed.

The letterbook which records Armson's correspon-

dence from 1877 until 1883, gives a clear picture of how closely and strictly he supervised works once in progress. He visited building sites regularly and his letters are full of lists of detailed information that suggest adjustments to the design or answers to queries. He frequently reminded his clerks of works that his every direction must be adhered to strictly.³⁰ Nor would he tolerate shoddy workmanship as is made clear in a letter to the mason working on St. Mary's, Timaru. Armson complained of a "patched window will" which had been "improperly wrought" and ordered the defective workmanship to be rectified at once.³¹

He frequently reminded builders of the approaching date of completion, and often ordered them to employ as many men as were necessary to finish the job on time. He even ordered the builders to employ men to work at night on the extensions to the Bank of New Zealand in Christchurch.³²

He was just as particular in matters of construction. In a letter to Thomas Tillmans, the builder of the Hobbs Company Building, he pointed out the "improper manner" of the preparation of the frame, reminding him of the provision in the specifications that they be made in the "best possible manner."³³ He also seems to have been very conscious of his status as architect. "I have nothing to do with workmen," he wrote to Tillmans, "unless their incompetency or misconduct call for the exercise of clause 20 of the Conditions of Contract."³⁴

Armson's dealings with his fellow architects were tactful and polite. When called on to report on the soundness of the walls of the Union Bank in Christchurch in January 1882, he was careful to inform Frederick Strouts, the architect for the Bank, of his involvement. The Bank subsequently asked Armson to design a new building but before accepting he again wrote to Strouts in order to ensure that "there may be no misunderstanding in the matter."³⁵ Armson's structural knowledge and sound judgement were highly valued and he acted as Consulting Architect to the Church Property Trustees for the Christchurch diocese, approving the plans for new churches before they were built.

Armson was always at pains to maintain the good-will of his clients. Even when he wrote to the Board of Governors of Canterbury College concerning his disputed account for the first set of Library drawings, he reassured them of his best intentions and that he was "only desirous of obtaining what is just and right . . ."³⁶ He also made it plain that he did not wish to continue with the contract "unless I possess the entire confidence of those for whom I am acting." Despite the disagreement, Armson's work must have pleased the Board of Governors for it subsequently employed him to design Christchurch Boys' High School and the second Girls' High School, both important commissions. All the evidence suggests that Armson's clients were well satisfied with the buildings he designed. The St. Alban's School Board, for example, were extremely pleased with the new school which Armson designed for them in 1873. The classrooms were described as "unquestionably superior for scholastic purposes to anything of the kind yet provided in the province . . ."³⁷ and the building as a whole presented "not only

a commanding appearance, but possesses extensive accommodation for the amount expended in its construction."

Armson's ability to meet the demands of his clients, producing work of a uniformly high standard in a variety of styles and building types, places him amongst the most successful architects in New Zealand in his day, and he was certainly unrivalled as a commercial architect. The list of Armson's contracts during the 1870s increased with each year and by the end of the decade his office was consistently producing about half-a-dozen major buildings annually. In 1879 Armson had contracts worth £47,000, an immense sum of money at that time. Indeed, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that

success killed him at the early age of fifty.

Armson effectively bridged the gap that had existed between the public and the local architects who served them. Perhaps more than any other architect of his time, he was responsible for gaining public respect for the architectural profession, and in so doing promoted the architects' claim for professional status. On his death his obituary in the *Press* asserted with considerable justification that he had "occupied the first position as an Architect in the colony." The quality of Armson's designs and the exacting standards of his professional conduct inaugurated a tradition which has in many ways set Christchurch apart in the architectural history of New Zealand.



- (1) Richard Greenaway, *Henry Selfe Selfe and the Origins and Early Development of Canterbury*. M.A. thesis, University of Canterbury, 1972, p. 222.
- (2) F. Jenkins, "The Victorian Architectural Profession," in P. Ferriday, ed., *Victorian Architecture*. London 1963, p. 39.
- (3) I. J. Lochhead, "Gilbert Scott, Benjamin Mountfort and the Building of Christchurch Cathedral," *Bulletin of New Zealand Art History*, 4, 1976, p. 4.
- (4) *Ibid.* p. 5.
- (5) *Press*. 17th February 1864, p. 3.
- (6) *The Building News*. vol. 32, 1877, p. 556.
- (7) P. R. Wilson, *The Architecture of Samuel Charles Farr, 1827-1918*. M.A. thesis, University of Canterbury, 1982, p. 23.
- (8) J. M. Freeland, *The Making of a Profession*. Melbourne, 1971, pp. 26-7.
- (9) [J. K. Collins], *A Century of Architecture*. Christchurch, 1965, and C. J. Mountfort, "Early History of the Canterbury Branch," *N.Z.I.A. Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1, April 1912, p. 47.
- (10) *Ibid.*
- (11) Freeland, p. 26.
- (12) *N.Z.I.A. Journal*. vol. 1, no. 1, April 1912, p. 48.
- (13) *Ibid.* p. 52.
- (14) The Scale of Charges is reproduced in Collins.
- (15) Otago Architects' Association, Scale of Charges, in possession of Mason and Wales, Dunedin.
- (16) *Lyttelton Times*. 9th March 1876, p. 2.
- (17) *W. B. Armson Letterbook*. 17th January 1883, pp. 509-10.
- (18) *Lyttelton Times*. 31st July 1874, p. 3.
- (19) *Ibid.* 27th July 1874, p. 2.
- (20) *Ibid.* 29th July 1874, p. 3.
- (21) *Ibid.* 30th July 1874, p. 3.
- (22) *Ibid.* 8th July 1875, p. 2.
- (23) *Ibid.* 7th August 1875, p. 3.
- (24) *Ibid.* 19th July 1875, p. 3.
- (25) *Ibid.* 28th June 1881, p. 5.
- (26) *Ibid.* 7th July 1881, p. 5.
- (27) Collins, p. 11.
- (28) *Ibid.* p. 12.
- (29) *Ibid.*
- (30) *Letterbook*. 23rd February 1882, p. 358.
- (31) *Ibid.* 25th October 1881, p. 307.
- (32) *Ibid.* 25th March 1879, p. 99.
- (33) *Ibid.* 19th May 1879, p. 120.
- (34) *Ibid.* 23rd July 1879, p. 140.
- (35) *Ibid.* 3rd February 1882, p. 356.
- (36) *Lyttelton Times*. 19th July 1875, p. 3.
- (37) *Ibid.* 25th April 1874, p. 2.

CATALOGUE

Unless otherwise stated, all drawings are by W. B. Armson and are from the collection of Collins, Hunt and Loveridge, Christchurch.

Dimensions are given in millimetres, height before width.

1. DESIGN FOR GOLD CASE

Plan and elevation

Pencil and wash on paper, 955 × 615

Signed: W. B. Armson, Architect, Melbourne, May 30th 1861

One of Armson's earliest surviving drawings, made shortly after he completed his training. At this time he may still have been employed by Purchas and Swyer but it is not known whether the design was executed. The elegant, Gothic display case was probably designed for one of Melbourne's banks where it would have been a focal point of the interior of the bank chamber.

2. BANK OF AUSTRALASIA

Front elevation

Pencil and wash on paper, 700 × 745

This fine drawing, dating from around 1860-61, demonstrates Armson's skill as a draughtsman at an early stage of his career. Although only three drawings survive from this period (see no. 1) they illustrate the level of his achievement prior to his arrival in New Zealand. The classical style Armson adopted for this building is firmly within the tradition of nineteenth-century bank architecture. The heavily rusticated ground floor has round-headed windows framing the central recessed entrance to the bank chamber. The first floor is dominated by a Corinthian order with an entablature and balustrade above. Although probably never built, the design looks forward to Armson's Bank of New Zealand in Dunedin, begun in 1879 (see no's. 19-26).

3. ST. LUKE'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, OAMARU

Rumsey and Jackson, architects

North elevation

Pen and wash with some pencil on paper, 655 × 880

Signed: Edwd. Rumsey and A. A. Jackson, Architects, Princes Street, Dunedin. Thornley and Armson, Architects, Oamaru.

Rumsey and Jackson received the commission for St. Luke's Church in December 1864, and construction began in 1865. Although little is known about A. A. Jackson, Edward Rumsey was an architect of considerable ability whose best known design is the splendid Supreme Court House in

Auckland of 1865. Rumsey moved to Auckland to supervise this important commission, recommending Armson as supervising architect for St. Luke's. Armson followed the original design faithfully, although pencil sketches of the north porch and for the cross which surmounts its gable suggest that the supervising architects introduced some minor embellishments. Armson nevertheless admired Rumsey and Jackson's severe but imposing design for he modelled his own St. Mary's Church, Timaru, on the earlier building (see no's. 27-30).

4. HOUSE FOR JAMES CHESNEY, HOKITIKA

Elevations, sections and plan

Pen and wash on paper, 480 × 535

Armson's house for James Chesney probably dates from 1868, the year after he designed a store for Chesney in Hokitika. Although modest in scale, the house is given distinction by its decorated barge boards, bay window and verandah. The architect was clearly aware of the trend towards opening up the interior of the house to the out-doors for the dining room and the adjacent bedroom have French windows opening onto the verandah. The same features reappear in the two-storied house for Dr Chapman in Leeston, built in 1877.

DESIGN FOR THEATRE, SHOPS AND OFFICES, CHRISTCHURCH

5. Front elevation

Pencil and wash on paper, 413 × 501

Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Colombo Street, Ch:Ch, 12/12/70

6. Ground and first floor plans

Pen and wash on paper, 670 × 523

Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Colombo Street, Ch:Ch, 16/2/71

7. Cross sections and plan of roof construction

Pen and wash on paper, 519 × 673

Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Christchurch, 22/2/71

This set of meticulously drawn and richly coloured plans documents Armson's first architectural work in Christchurch. Unfortunately, the theatre was never built, but the drawings still provide a fascinating glimpse of a nineteenth-century theatre. Behind the ornate classical facade extends the large, multi-functional building. The shop premises are located on the ground floor with office space above. From the centrally-placed

entrance arch a stair leads to the first-floor offices and the gallery of the theatre beyond. A separate entrance at the side of the building gives access to the pit. The stage, in accordance with nineteenth-century practice, is raked. The theatre's stone facade contains elements which recurred in Armson's works throughout the next decade. The arcaded shop fronts and the central Palladian window motif on the first floor reappear on the facade of Strange's Building (no. 9), while the group of three windows with central segmental pediment, also on the first floor, is re-employed on the north facade of the Borough (now Excelsior) Hotel.

8. **LYTTELTON BOROUGH SCHOOLS**
West and east elevations
Pen and wash on paper, 590 × 960
Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Christchurch
Collection: Lyttelton Museum

The second of a set of seven contract drawings now in the collection of the Lyttelton Museum. The school was begun in February 1873 and completed in January 1875, the *Weekly Press* for January 23rd praising Armson for "designing not only a commodious but also a handsome school which bears comparison with any in the province." Armson employed the Gothic style favoured for schools by nineteenth-century architects and his varied and picturesque composition fully justified the praise the building received. Red, pressed bricks and local stone were used in the construction of the building, producing a rich, polychrome effect. Unfortunately, the cast-iron work from Melbourne which formed part of the original design was never included. Although now demolished, the Lyttelton Borough School was perhaps Armson's finest educational building.

9. **STRANGE'S BUILDING, HIGH STREET, CHRISTCHURCH**
Front elevation
Pen and wash on paper, 450 × 780
Collection: Canterbury Museum

Armson's design for shops for William Strange (better known today as Butterfield's) dates from early 1874. The large, arched windows of the ground floor are similar to those used in the shop-fronts of the 1870 theatre design (see no. 5). The building still exists although additional floors, closely following the style of the original design, were added by Collins and Harman in 1904.

10. **PUBLIC LIBRARY, CHRISTCHURCH, COMPETITION DESIGN**
Transverse sections
Pen and wash on paper, 590 × 930

11. **PUBLIC LIBRARY, CHRISTCHURCH**
Front and south elevations
Pen and wash on paper, 610 × 955
Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt.

In 1874 Armson won the competition to design a new Christchurch Public Library, even though his entry was submitted late. No. 10 is one of the set of competition-winning drawings and shows the splendid two-storied, galleried reading room in the Gothic style which Armson envisaged. The lowest tender for this stone building was £10,000, a sum which far exceeded the £4,000 available. Armson was asked to submit a revised design for a more modest structure in brick. No. 11 shows the design which still stands today as part of the recently restored Library Chambers. This building, in the Ruskinian or Venetian Gothic style, has striped voussoirs above the windows and horizontal bands of glazed bricks enlivening the wall surfaces. The roof is capped by a ventilator turret with a French pavilion roof, topped by wrought-iron cresting. A timber corridor with an entrance at the centre linked the new reading room with S. C. Farr's original Mechanics' Institute of 1863.

12. **HOTEL FOR JOHN BARRETT, PETERBOROUGH AND DURHAM STREETS, CHRISTCHURCH**
Elevations
Pen and wash on paper, 525 × 730
Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt.

This building, which dates from 1876, survives in a much modified form as the Gladstone Hotel. A modest timber design, it is the earlier of the two hotels by Armson in Christchurch. The Borough Hotel on Manchester Street (now the Excelsior) was built in 1881–82 for Michael McGoverin and is a much more impressive building of brick and plaster. Armson's design for John Barrett may well have established a standard type of corner hotel and can be compared with S. C. Farr's Grosvenor Hotel, built in 1877 on the corner of Madras Street and Moorhouse Avenue.

13. **OFFICES FOR JOHN LEWIS, HEREFORD STREET, CHRISTCHURCH**
Front elevation and section
Pen and wash on paper, 515 × 745
Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt.

Between 1871 and 1883 Armson designed twelve commercial buildings in Hereford Street. The style of these buildings ranged from the classicism of the Charles Clark Building of 1871 to the Venetian Gothic of the John Lewis Offices of 1877. The handsome facade of this building, with its careful detailing and varied fenestration pattern, helped to set a new standard for commercial architecture in central Christchurch. As a group, Armson's Hereford Street buildings were a remarkable achievement, unrivalled in any other New Zealand city. The loss of all but one of these examples of Armson's work — Fisher's Building is the sole survivor — has sadly impoverished the architectural character of the city.

14. **UNITED METHODIST FREE CHURCH, ST. ASAPH STREET, CHRISTCHURCH**

East, west and south elevation and ground plan
Pen and wash on paper, 645 × 750
Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt.

For this church Armson adapted the Gothic style to timber construction as well as to the liturgical requirements of a non-conformist congregation. Perhaps the most surprising feature of the design is the prominent chimney at the east end where we would normally find the chancel in an Anglican church. Also unusual is the pavilion roofed tower, a feature more usually associated with secular buildings. The church was built in 1877 but it no longer exists.

15. BANK OF NEW ZEALAND, LYTTTELTON
Front elevation and cross section
Pen and wash on paper, 565 × 685
Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Christchurch.

16. Side elevation
Pen and wash with some pencil on paper,
565 × 658
Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Christchurch

During the last decade of his life Armson was the pre-eminent bank architect in New Zealand. He designed buildings for all the banks trading in Christchurch and won commissions from as far afield as Dunedin and Auckland. The Lyttelton Bank of New Zealand, built in 1878, is one of Armson's many variations on the Renaissance palace model, here given added interest by the detailing of the side elevation as well as the main facade. The front elevation shown in no. 15 was redesigned prior to the execution of no. 16; the rusticated corner piers and columns on the first floor were replaced by engaged columns to match those in the centre while the balustrade was also modified.

17. BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL, WORCESTER STREET, CHRISTCHURCH
Front elevation
Pen and wash with some pencil on paper
630 × 940
Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt.
Collection: On loan to Christchurch Boys' High School

18. Sections AA and DD and details
Pen and wash on paper, 642 × 945
Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt.
Collection: On loan to Christchurch Boys' High School

Christchurch Boys' High School was built in 1879 in the Gothic style. The drawing for the Worcester Street facade shows Armson modifying the design at a comparatively late stage in the building's evolution. The flèche, which functions as a ventilator, is shown in two positions, above the western wing and pencilled in over the main roof in the position it finally assumed. Armson also

reworked the lines of the central gable, breaking up its simple triangular form where it intersects with the roof. These last minute changes of detail reflect Armson's continuous search for excellence in design.

The cross sections (no. 18) show the skilful arrangement of the classroom space around the central staircase, as well as the impressive open timber roofs on the first floor. The building was extended to the west in 1912 and now forms part of the Christchurch Arts Centre.

- BANK OF NEW ZEALAND, DUNEDIN
19. Basement plan
Pen and wash on paper, 635 × 965
Signed: W. B. Armson, Architect, Christchurch
20. Ground plan
Pen and wash on paper, 635 × 965
Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Christchurch
21. Interior elevations of bank chamber and mezzanine plan
Pen and wash on paper, 635 × 965
Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Christchurch
22. Cross section C.D.
Pen and wash on paper, 618 × 958
Signed: W. B. Armson
Collection: On loan to Canterbury Branch, New Zealand Institute of Architects
23. Ceiling of bank chamber and cross section E.F.
Pen and wash on paper, 635 × 965
Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Christchurch
24. Elevation to Princes Street
Pen and wash on paper, 618 × 958
Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Christchurch
Collection: On loan to Canterbury Branch, New Zealand Institute of Architects
25. Girders
Pen and wash on paper, 635 × 965
Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Christchurch
26. Lift
Pen and wash on paper, 635 × 965
Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Christchurch

The fifteen contract drawings for the Bank of New Zealand in Dunedin, dated 28th November 1879, are perhaps the finest and certainly the most elaborate drawings produced for any building of Armson's career. The bank was his most ambitious design and is a fitting memorial to his career.

The eight drawings exhibited provide a superb record of both the interior and exterior design of the bank. The basement (no. 19), with walls 1.9 metres thick, housed the strongrooms as well as the smelting room essential for processing the gold on which Dunedin's wealth was based. The first floor contained the bank chamber (no. 20) with its

richly decorated door cases, window surrounds and plaster ceiling (no's 21 and 22). However, all that remains of this fine interior is the plaster ceiling which has recently been restored. Unlike the interior, the exterior remains essentially unchanged, its richly modelled facades extending round two sides of the bank's commanding site on the corner of Princes and Rattray Streets (no. 24). Armson's highly accomplished essay in Renaissance classicism is unexcelled in New Zealand and would not have seemed out of place in Victorian Britain.

The historicism of the exterior belies the use of the new structural materials and mechanical services which nineteenth-century architects were employing with greater confidence. Two remarkable drawings showing iron girders and the lift mechanism (no's. 25 and 26) were executed with the same precision and meticulous attention to detail that Armson lavished on his classical facades. These two drawings reveal him as an utterly professional architect and engineer and as very much a man of his time.

ST. MARY'S ANGLICAN CHURCH, TIMARU

27. North elevation

Pen and wash on paper, 630 × 700

Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Christchurch

28. Plan

Pen and wash with some pencil on paper, 630 × 700

Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Christchurch

29. Longitudinal section

Pen and wash on paper, 630 × 700

Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Christchurch

30. Transverse section

Pen and wash on paper, 630 × 700

Signed: W. B. Armson, Archt., Christchurch

St. Mary's Church was Armson's last and most important ecclesiastical commission. The compact, carefully proportioned design is closely related to Rumsey and Jackson's St. Luke's Church, Oamaru, for which Armson acted as supervising architect in 1865 (no. 3). St. Mary's also reveals his familiarity with the ideas of Pugin and the Ecclesiologists and his library contained some of the most significant nineteenth-century publications on church architecture. The broad, aisled nave is clearly distinguished from the apsidal east end although the transepts are given less emphasis. On the north side the tower, with its broach spire occupies the position of the transept while the south transept is more a side-chapel than a transept proper (no's. 27 and 28). The interior of St. Mary's, even on a sunny day, is gloomy, and as a result the beauties of the splendid open timber roof cannot be fully appreciated (no. 29). Armson only saw the nave built, and when the church was completed by Collins and Harman in 1910 a square tower and rectangular chancel were substituted for his original design. Armson's scheme, along with a sketch for Collins and Harman's revised choir can be seen in no. 30. In recent years a porch was added to the west end.



CHECKLIST OF BUILDINGS

While employed by the Engineer's Department of the Otago Provincial Government between April 1862 and June 1864, Armson worked on a wide range of projects. Lists of works for 1862-63 can be found in *Otago Provincial Gazette*, November 1862, pp. 213-216 and *Otago Votes and Proceedings, Sessions XVI-XVII*, 1862-63, pp. 37-40. The following checklist includes major commissions only. An asterisk denotes surviving buildings which have been identified.

1865

*St. Luke's Anglican Church, Oamaru, (supervising architect).

1866

Union Bank of Australia, Hokitika.
Cottage for Dr Beswick, Hokitika.
Cottage for Dr Ryley, Hokitika.
Hotel for Mr Kelly, Hokitika.
Billiardroom and addition, Café de Paris, Hokitika.
Hotel for Samuel Gilmore, Buller.

1867

Union Bank of Australia, Waimea.
Episcopal Church, Ross.
Episcopal Church, Greymouth.
Store for James Chesney and Co., Hokitika.
Shop for John Crerar and Co., Hokitika.
Grandstand, Hokitika Raceway.

1868

Bank of Australasia, Hokitika.
*Union Bank of Australia, Greymouth.
*Bank of Australasia, Greymouth.
Cottage (for J. Chesney?) Hokitika.

1869

Malthouse and Kiln for Pizzey and Co., Hokitika.
*Two-storeyed building for James Taylor, Greymouth.
Town Hall, Hokitika.
Bank, Ross.
Shop for Fowler and Co., Hokitika.
Bank of New South Wales, Greymouth.

1870

Bank of New South Wales, Ross.

1871

Shop for R. Sutherland, Cashel Street, Christchurch.
Oddfellows Hall, Lichfield Street, Christchurch.
Shops for A. Osborne, Cashel Street, Christchurch.
Store for New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Co., Lyttelton.
House for S. Stuckey, Ferry Road.
Offices for Charles Clark, Hereford Street, Christchurch.

1872

Office and Store for L. E. Nathan, Hereford Street, Christchurch.
Offices for W. D. Wood, Manchester Street, Christchurch.
House for Dr Frankish, Colombo Street, Christchurch.
Shop for J. A. Rankin, Addington, Christchurch.
Merivale Parsonage.
Merivale School.

1873

Lyttelton Borough Schools.
Offices for Maling and Co., Hereford Street, Christchurch.
*Shops for Revd. M. Baxter, 29 Victoria Street, Christchurch.
Store for Wood, Shand and Co., Oxford Terrace, Christchurch.

1874

*Shops for W. Strange and Co., 231 High Street, Christchurch.
St. Albans School.
St. Albans School, Master's House.
Offices, R. D. Thomas, Hereford Street, Christchurch.
Cottage for Dr Powell, Worcester Street, Christchurch.

1875

School at Lincoln.
Offices for Joynt and O'Neill, Hereford Street, Christchurch.
*Former Public Library, Cambridge Terrace, Christchurch.
*Former Bank of New Zealand, Temuka.

1876

Wooden grandstand for Canterbury Jockey Club.
*Devonshire Arms (Gladstone) Hotel, 328 Durham Street, Christchurch.
Cottage for Joynt and O'Neill.
House for L. and E. Coster, Rakaia.

1877

*Dr Chapman's House, Leeston.
House and Stable for M. Hamilton, Montreal Street, Christchurch.
Offices for J. Lewis, Hereford Street, Christchurch.
Store for Royse, Stead and Co., Heathcote.
Offices for Harman and Stevens, Hereford Street, Christchurch.
House for R. D. Thomas, Park Terrace, Christchurch.

1878

Bank of New Zealand, Lyttelton.
 Colonial Bank, Hereford Street, Christchurch.
 Stable, Bishop's Court, Christchurch.
 Additions, Bank of New Zealand, Hereford Street,
 Christchurch.

1879

*Boys' High School, Worcester Street, Christchurch.
 Shop for Hobbs and Co., High Street, Christchurch.
 Offices for T. L. Joynt, Gloucester Street,
 Christchurch.
 *Bank of New Zealand, Princes Street, Dunedin.
 Additions, Bank of New South Wales, Hereford
 Street, Christchurch.

1880

Offices for J. W. Williams, Gloucester Street,
 Christchurch.
 *Offices for Christchurch Gas Company, 96
 Gloucester Street, Christchurch.
 House for Mr Bell Hay, Lichfield Street,
 Christchurch.
 *Girls' High School, Armagh Street, Christchurch.
 *Shops for Rev. T. R. Fisher, High and Hereford
 Streets, Christchurch.
 *St. Mary's Church, Timaru.

1881

*Bank of New Zealand, Rakaia.
 Boys' High School, Christchurch, Bath and
 Outbuildings.

*Shops for John Anderson (Bell's Arcade), Cashel
 Street, Christchurch.
 *Store for New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Co.,
 Durham Street, Christchurch.
 Offices for New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Co.,
 Hereford Street, Christchurch.
 Grandstand and Pavilion, Lancaster Park,
 Christchurch.
 *Borough (Excelsior) Hotel for Michael McGoverin,
 Manchester and High Streets, Christchurch.
 *Warehouse, Butterworth Bros., (Harald's), 80
 Lichfield Street, Christchurch.
 Bank of New Zealand, Ashburton.
 Offices, New Zealand Shipping Co., Lyttelton.
 Store, New Zealand Loan and Mercantile Co.,
 Ashburton.

1882

Bank of New South Wales, Napier.
 Union Bank, Hereford Street, Christchurch.
 Bank of New South Wales, Queen Street, Auckland.
 Shops for D. Melville, Armagh Street, Christchurch.

1883

National Bank, Hereford Street, Christchurch.
 Bank of New South Wales, New Plymouth.
 House for Miss C. Mitchell, Kilmore Street,
 Christchurch.
 House for A. R. Bloxham, Norman's Lane,
 Christchurch.
 Bank of New South Wales, Nelson.
 Bank of New Zealand, Geraldine.





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