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King's building fetches \$1.2m

The three-story King's Building in central New Plymouth — once the pride of the city — has been sold for \$1.2 million and will undergo extensive renovations.

The shops and offices block on the corner of Devon and Brougham streets has been bought by the New Plymouth-based Westwill group.

One of the group's directors, Mr Willie Still, New Plymouth, said the 4300sq m building will continue to be a retail and commercial property, but its image will be upgraded and more fully used.

Existing shops and offices will remain, but the outside of the building will be cleaned to bring it up to modern standards.

Mr Still was not sure at this stage how much money would be spent on upgrading the building, but said extensive work would be undertaken during the next two to three years.

The group was considering adding another floor and providing parking facilities in the basement.

He added that the building's lift would be upgraded, along with the entrance foyer and stairways.

He described the building as one with a lot of character and very substantial and sound.

"Even though other projects are planned there is still room for more development in the central city area," Mr Still told the Herald.

The building was constructed about 1925 by Jones and Sandford Ltd for one of the city's founding fathers, Newton King.

It was designed by an Auckland firm of architects, Gummer and Ford, who also prepared plans for the Auckland and Wellington railway stations and many other large New Zealand public buildings.

Current Jones and Sandford managing director Rodney Jones, New Plymouth, say it was the companies first big construction job.

The tender of £52,000 submitted by his father, Williams Jones, and partner Arthur Sandford was the lowest and he recalls a story told by his father of the day they won the contract.

"They were led into Newton King's office by one of the architects who introduced them as the lowest tenders," Mr Jones said.

Said Mr King: "Well, you have never borrowed any money from me and you do not owe me any money, so you can have the contract."

The final structure was one of the largest in the city at the time.

The building was previously owned by the King Estate. Yesterday's deal was negotiated by Mr Pat Riordan, the manager of Dalgety Crown Ltd's New Plymouth real estate office.

Dalgety Crown is the present day offshoot of what was Newton King Ltd.

It has a basement — which has been subject of Huatoki Stream flooding — ground floor shops and two stories of office accommodation around a central courtyard.

A small apartment on the roof was, according to one report built for one of Newton King's daughters.

There is a large entrance way to the offices of Devon St and two lifts.



New Plymouth's King's Building ... major changes ahead.