

Heritage Buildings Report

Site ID

Building/Site Name

Inglewood BNZ (Former)

Address

22 Matai Street, Inglewood



Statement of Significance

This building has considerable heritage significance as the premises of the Inglewood branch of the Bank of New Zealand from 1943 until 1997, with the bank first occupying this site in 1879. Designed by noted New Plymouth architect Thomas Herbert Bates, the building is a good example of his commercial work, and a rather rare local example of a substantial commercial building constructed during the Second World War years. An interesting example of a well-proportioned two-storey commercial building designed in the Art Deco/Moderne style, the building is highly visible and makes a strong positive contribution to both the historical character of the streetscape and to Inglewood's small-town aesthetic.



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Legal Information and Heritage Status

Legal Description PT Section 259 Town of Inglewood

District Plan Item/ Map No.

Heritage New Zealand List Not listed

Construction Information

Date of Construction 1941-43

Principal Materials Reinforced concrete, brick, corrugated steel

Construction Professionals Thomas Herbert Bates (architect), Jones & Sandford Ltd (builders)

History

Establishment of Inglewood

On January 22nd, 1875, a party of Taranaki Provincial Council Members officially named a clearing in the Moa Block 'Inglewood'.¹ The first sale of town sections took place at New Plymouth on 20 March 1875; although only six of the 66 sections offered were initially sold.² Surveying of the township soon commenced and clearing of the thick native forest continued in earnest. Immigrants settled the new town from around New Zealand, Britain and other parts of Europe, including Poles, Danes, Swiss and Italians.³ By October 1876 it was reported that a number of buildings had been constructed in the infant settlement, including a general store, hotel and even a railway station; although it would be another year before the New Plymouth-Marton Railway reached Inglewood in late 1877.⁴ By early 1878 Inglewood was still without banking facilities, however, this would soon change, with Inglewood's first Bank of New Zealand (BNZ) office, and Inglewood's first bank, opened by H. H. Taylor on March 19th, 1878.⁵

Inglewood's First Bank

Thought to have been located in leased premises, Inglewood's first BNZ office operated as an agency connected with the New Plymouth branch.⁶ By October 1879, part of Section 259 of the Town of Inglewood, fronting Matai Street, or Mountain Road as it was originally known, had been purchased by BNZ, with a small cottage functioning as a banking office soon erected on the site.⁷ Taylor remained at Inglewood until July 1880 when he was transferred to New Plymouth, after which time the bank became a sub-agency of the Waitara agency.⁸ At this time the Inglewood BNZ office was visited twice a week by R. J. Mathews from the Waitara office; banking services being available between 11am and 1pm on those days.⁹ After 1889, the Inglewood sub-agency was open from 10am

¹ *Taranaki Herald*, 19 December 1911, page 6

² *Taranaki Herald*, 17 February 1875, page 3

³ Lambert, Ron. "Taranaki places - Inglewood." *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*. Updated March 5, 2018. <http://www.teara.govt.nz>, accessed 5 September 2019.

⁴ *Taranaki Budget and Weekly Herald*, 26 October 1876; Scanlan, Arthur Brian. *Taranaki's First Railway*. New Plymouth: Arthur Brian Scanlan, 1977.

⁵ Griffin, Robin Henry. *BNZ Inglewood: A century of service 1878-1978*. Wellington: BNZ Archives, 1978.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

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to 3pm in summer, opening half an hour later during the winter months.¹⁰ Despite being the only bank in Inglewood until 1892, a full time BNZ agency was not re-established until 1895, with Evelyn Broad as agent.¹¹

During 1899, it was decided to erect new banking premises with an adjoining residence.¹² Plans for the new bank were prepared by New Plymouth architect James Sanderson the following year, with construction taking place soon after; the contractors being the firm of Boon Bros.¹³ During 1911 alterations designed by New Plymouth architect Frank Messenger were completed; these included the addition of a strong room and Corinthian columns along the facade.¹⁴ In 1927, builder Noble King was responsible for the addition of another bedroom and also construction of a motor garage.¹⁵ Despite the various alterations and additions, by 1940 it was clear that the old bank building had out-lived its usefulness and a decision was made to rebuild anew on the same site.¹⁶

The Present Building

Following the decision to rebuild, noted New Plymouth architect Thomas Herbert Bates was engaged by BNZ to design a two-storied building with reinforced concrete frame and brick walls.¹⁷ Thomas Bates (1873-1954) was one of New Plymouth's foremost architects during the first half of the twentieth century, and was associated with a significant number of substantial commercial and residential buildings between 1916 and 1953. His first contract was the supervision of Everybody's Theatre (now the Mayfair) for Auckland architects Grierson and Aimer, shortly followed by a comparable role for Wellington architect Frederick de Jersey Clere for the AMP Building (now Peggy Gordon's).¹⁸ He soon established a practice in the city, where his work included large reinforced concrete commercial and industrial buildings, dairy factories, private dwellings predominantly in the English Domestic Revival style, and rarely, single-storey bungalows. His last commission was in 1952-53, being the refurbishment of the Criterion Hotel. He died in early 1954, aged 81, in a plane crash at Singapore Airport.¹⁹

Surveyors Palmer & Saxton pegged the boundaries for the new building during early-1941, with the successful tenderers for construction of the building being the New Plymouth firm of Jones and Sandford, of which descendent joinery firm survives to this day.²⁰ Construction commenced on September 23rd 1941, although was plagued by difficulties and delays; chiefly as a result of the Second World War.²¹ By May 1942, Thomas Bates reported that the walls and roofing timbers were in place and contractors were ready to fix the Fibrolite roofing.²² However, work was delayed by wet weather and the loss of tradesmen, who left the job to undertake better-paid war work in other districts.²³ It wasn't until February 15th 1943 that the upstairs accommodation was occupied, with office staff finally moving into the ground floor almost two months later on April 12th.²⁴

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Burgess, Robyn (1988). Thomas Herbert Bates, New Plymouth, Research Essay. Puke Ariki (ARC2001-468)

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Griffin, Robin Henry. *BNZ Inglewood: A century of service 1878-1978*. Wellington: BNZ Archives, 1978.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

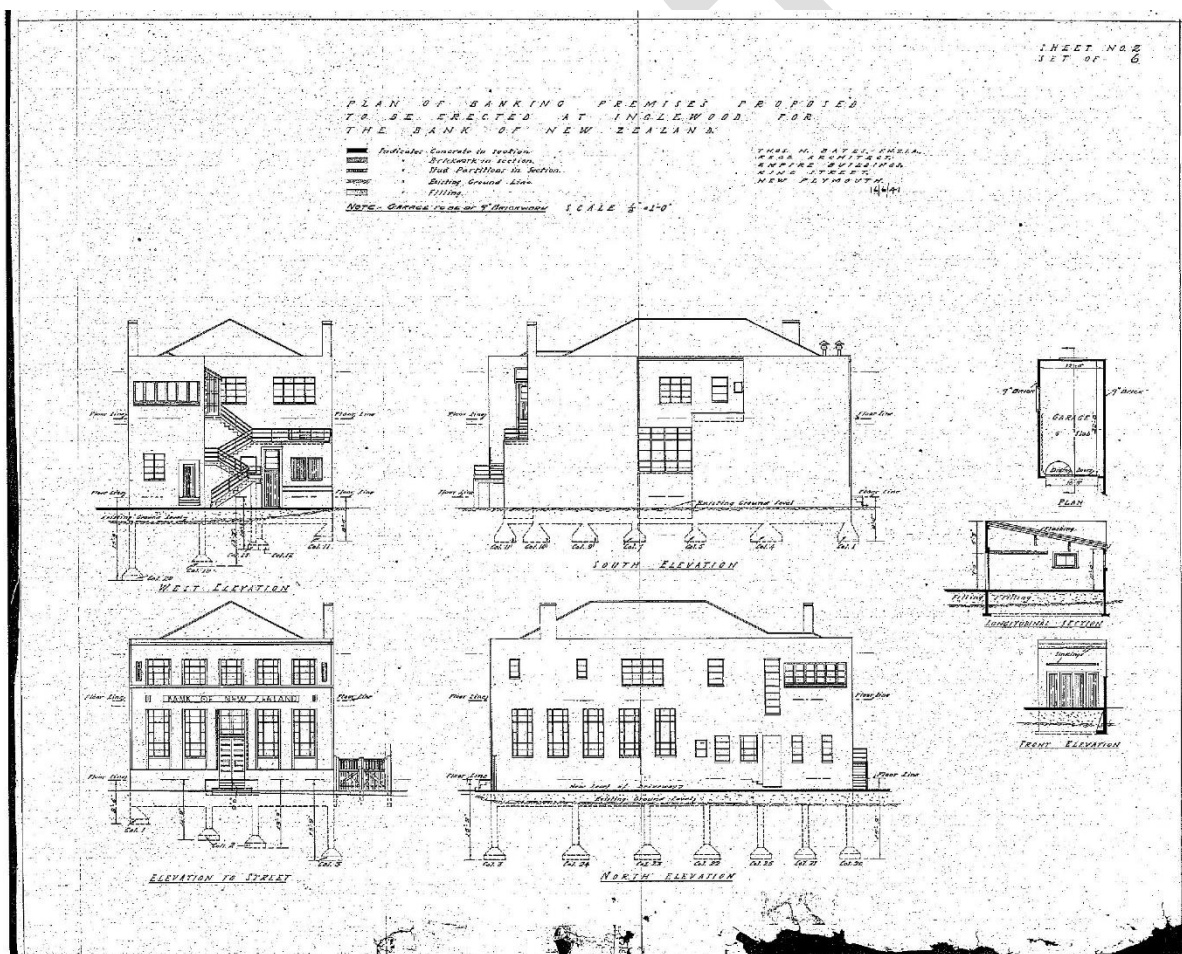
²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.



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The Inglewood BNZ continued to operate from this building until mid-July 1997, when the Inglewood branch was no longer seen as economically viable and permanently closed.²⁵ Unprecedented competition and growing customer preferences for electronic banking were at the time cited as key reasons for the closure.²⁶ During October 1997, the former BNZ property was sold to private owners and has since been occupied by a mixture of commercial and residential tenants. The property was sold in 2005 and 2009, before being purchased by its present owners in 2016. During early-2019 the building was repainted and acquired its present colour scheme; it is presently occupied by Complete Automation Ltd. As is evidenced by discussion on the local Inglewood history Facebook page 'Growing Up in Inglewood', the building appears an important element in the community's consciousness, with many Inglewood residents having fond memories of the building from the second half of the twentieth century.²⁷



Sheet 2 of 6 showing side elevations, NPDC Building File

²⁵ *The Daily News*, 8 July 1997, page 5

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Linda Jones. "The BNZ, in Inglewood, back in the day. I started working there in 1986." Facebook, June 30th, 2019. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/911898329197933/permalink/1114721895582241/>



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Late 1970s view of bank, from Griffin, Robin Henry. *BNZ Inglewood: A century of service 1878-1978*. Wellington: BNZ Archives, 1978.

Reference Sources

See footnotes.

Description

The former Inglewood BNZ is located on the eastern side of busy Matai Street/SH3 in the heart of the Taranaki township of Inglewood. Positioned close to the front property boundary, the building is highly visible to members of the public and is prominent in views along Matai Street. The former BNZ is one of a number of interesting older buildings of varying ages which give Inglewood's town centre a unique historic character. It is also a rather rare local example of a substantial commercial building constructed during the Second World War years (1939-45).

Designed in the Art Deco/Moderne style, the former Inglewood BNZ building is rectilinear in form and is constructed principally of reinforced concrete with some brick infill walls. The exterior walls are plastered, with the façade finished to resemble stonework. The hipped gable roof is sheathed in corrugated steel and is partially hidden behind a low parapet. The building incorporates two full-height single-flue chimneys, one rising near the front north-eastern corner, and the other rising near the south-western corner.

The Matai Street façade is symmetrically arranged into five principal bays and follows the classical tripartite composition of base, middle and top. This tripartite composition, along with the use of recessed



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windows, which are cleverly designed to give the impression of pilasters (referencing the columns used in classical bank architecture), ensures that despite its modern appearance, the building still gives the impression of solidity and permanency historically associated with banking institutions.

A heavy plinth elevates the building above street level, with access provided by a double concrete ramp added during the 1980s. The central ground floor bay is presently fitted with a pair of incongruous glazed aluminium doors (replacing the original timber doors), with divided steel window above; these being separated by a recessed moulded spandrel and framed with moulded reveals incorporating a simple geometric pattern. The remaining four ground floor bays are fitted with tall recessed steel windows incorporating rectangular panes; a modern sign is fitted above.

A simple moulded cornice clearly delineates the ground and first floor levels and also functions as a sill for the first-floor windows. Originally fabricated from steel, the first-floor windows have unfortunately recently been replaced with aluminium versions; although being well-designed they do not overly detract from the general appearance of the building (however, further replacement of original joinery components should be discouraged). A slender decorative moulded vent is positioned at either end of the row, with a single recessed horizontal line stretching across the parapet.

The remaining elevations are completely unadorned, although the plastered walls are frequently interrupted by the many recessed rigid metal windows providing ample natural light to interior spaces. On the northern elevation, five tall divided windows (identical to those on the main front elevation) provide additional light to the original banking chamber, whilst numerous smaller windows provide further light to the rear ground floor office spaces and upper floor residence.

The rear elevation incorporates further recessed windows, recessed porch and an external first floor staircase. A small 1969 ground floor addition extends west along the southern boundary. Along the northern boundary is a single car garage designed in the Art Deco style and contemporary with the main bank building. The principle feature of the southern elevation is a recessed light well, likely constructed in anticipation of future intensification on the neighbouring property.

Assessment:

Historical	This building has considerable heritage significance for its long association with the Bank of New Zealand from 1943 until 1997. In 1878 BNZ became the first bank to open an office in Inglewood, occupying the site of the present building from 1879 until 1997. Designed by noted New Plymouth architect Thomas Herbert Bates, the building is a good example of his commercial work.	✓
Importance to Community	With the building utilised as banking premises until 1997, many present residents likely conducted business at the building and have memories of the building from the second half of the twentieth century.	✓
Architecture & Construction	An interesting example of a well-proportioned two-storey commercial building designed in the Art Deco/Moderne style.	✓
Setting and Context	Positioned on the street frontage, this building is highly visible and makes a strong positive contribution to both the historical character of the streetscape and to Inglewood's small-town aesthetic.	✓
Archaeology	-	



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Representativeness, rarity and integrity	Despite some modifications, the exterior of the former Inglewood BNZ still retains a high degree integrity.	✓
Meets threshold for listing (three or more ticks, or two ticks in one criterion)		✓

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