

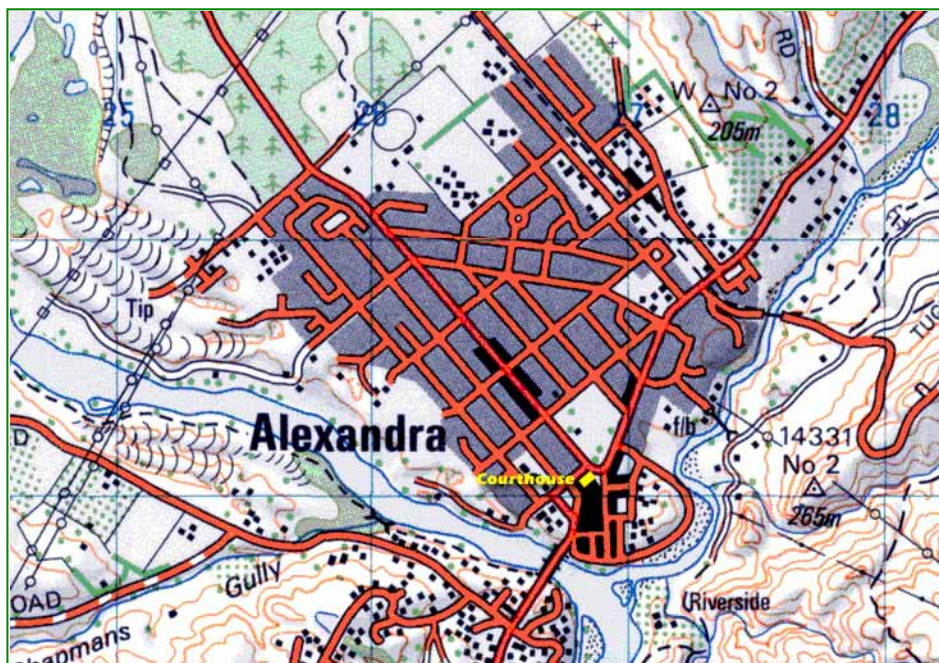


Built c. 1878 **Alexandra Courthouse**



Banner image:
Bannockburn earthworks,
Otago Goldfields Park.
Photographer: Smith, B. 1978

Photo taken by Colin Perfect, 28th January 2003



Scale 1:50 000

Source: NZMS 260 G42 268 441



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Built c. 1878 **Alexandra Courthouse**

Management: Asset: 16255
Central Otago Area Office, Otago Conservancy, Department of Conservation

Fabric: The building in 1879, comprised a courtroom and small entry porch.¹ Three additional rooms and a strong-room were added later c.1906. Foundations and walls were constructed from local schist stone. Roofing is the original corrugated iron, and there are two brick chimneys. Interior walls are plastered and ceilings are matchlined, floors are kauri and rimu. Three fireplaces with wooden surrounds remain. Windows are double hung timber sashes in timber frames fixed in the stone walls. Exterior doors are panelled.

The freestanding toilet block has a timber frame, rusticated weatherboards and corrugated iron skillion roof. It contains two flush toilets both of which are independently accessible from the exterior, and a tool store. The tops of both toilet doors feature a saw tooth profile for ventilation.²

The building was restored in 1983 including the replacement or repair of architraves, ceiling, fireplace surrounds, skirting boards, and some patch plastering. Nothing has been done since and the courthouse now requires further remedial work [2003].

History: The original building was constructed in 1878 and opened 16th June 1879, housing both the Wardens and Magistrates Courts. The Wardens Court dealt with the registration and enforcement of miners' rights. Disputes arose over claim jumping, forgeries, water races, roading and between partners of a joint claim. Granting business licences to traders operating within the goldfields was another aspect.³ The Magistrates Court dealt with more general legal matters.

The building operated as a courthouse until 1972. Between 1973 and 1985 it was used by a variety of government agencies and local groups. In May 1977 Historic Places Trust classified the building as Grade C, i.e. that its preservation should be encouraged. In 1978 the courthouse became a Historic Reserve. In 1983, "...in view of the importance and intrinsic interest of the legal system which operated on the goldfields..." and also, because it was still publicly owned and historically more intact than other such courthouses, the Department of Lands & Survey decided the courthouse should be interpreted as part of its Otago Goldfields Park.⁴ This park, comprising 22 sites, is now managed by DOC. In 1984/85 an Alexandra District Planning Scheme proposed the courthouse be demolished to make way for a car park as part of its town centre redevelopment. A petition seeking preservation attracted some 300 signatures and the Council decided not to go ahead with the car park.

Fabric Significance: The building played an important part in the day to day life of the Central Otago Goldfields, and is one of the oldest stone buildings in Alexandra.⁵

Historic Significance: The significance of the courthouse in the development of mining law in New Zealand is a key contribution that was made to our society.

Future management: It has the following statutory management status:

Historic Reserve in terms of the Reserves Act 1977 (Gazetted 1978, p471, section 47, block 11, Town of Alexandra)

Registered Category 2 (Historic Places Act 1993), registration number 2081/1977

Alexandra Courthouse Conservation Management Strategy listing (Conservation Act 1987)



¹ Court House Alexandra Central Otago. Prevention cyclical maintenance plan prepared for DoC by McCoy & Wixon Architects Ltd, June 1996

² Ibid

³ Alexandra Courthouse Historic Reserve, Management Plan (Draft). Department of Lands & Survey, 1985

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Alexandra Courthouse Historic Reserve, Management Plan (Draft). Department of Lands & Survey, 1985