

# III ART DECO TRUST

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## ART DECO TRUST INFORMATION SHEET 6 © ART DECO TRUST(INC) APRIL 2008

# FACTS ABOUT THE HAWKE'S BAY EARTHQUAKE

### STATISTICAL DATA:

|                            |  |                                  |
|----------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| <b>TIME:</b>               | 46 minutes and 46.3 seconds after 10.00 am on Tuesday February 3, 1931.  |                                  |
| <b>MAGNITUDE:</b>          | 7.8 on the Richter Scale.<br>10-11 on the Modified Mercalli Scale of felt intensity in the Napier/<br>Hastings area. |                                  |
| <b>EPICENTRE:</b>          | (Estimated) 20 kms north-north-east of Napier, just off the coast near Tangoio<br>and Waipataki.                     |                                  |
| <b>FOCUS:</b>              | Shallow, at approximately 16 kilometres.   |                                  |
| <b>DURATION:</b>           | 2.5 minutes, with a 30 second lull in the middle.  |                                  |
| <b>AFTERSHOCKS:</b>        | Approximately 150 in the 12 hours post earthquake.<br>525 in the 14 days post earthquake.                            |                                  |
| <b>DEATHS:</b>             | Napier   | 157                              |
|                            | Hastings   | 101                              |
|                            | <u>Wairoa</u>  | <u>3</u>                         |
|                            | 261  | (594 hospitalised from injuries) |
| <b>POPULATION in 1931:</b> | Napier   | 16,025                           |
|                            | Hastings   | 10,850                           |
|                            | Napier/Hastings/Taradale/Havelock North  | 30,000                           |

### GENERAL INFORMATION:

#### FIRES:

They began in chemists' shops where gas jets were in close proximity to flammable liquids. One hour after the earthquake, the fires were spreading rapidly. Fires also broke out at Ahuriri. In Napier, the water supply was lost and there was little that firemen could do. In Hastings, the water supply remained intact so the fires were contained.

#### THE NAVY:

HMS Veronica was moored at West Quay. HMS Dunedin and HMS Diomedé left Auckland with medical supplies and personnel at 3.00pm that day and arrived in Napier at 8.30am on Wednesday.

#### ACCOMMODATION:

People (afraid to enter their homes) camped in their gardens, on road-sides, at Nelson Park and on the Marine Parade Beach.

#### ADMINISTRATION:

The Napier Borough Council relinquished control under the Municipal Corporations Act 1920, and two Commissioners were appointed by the Government to oversee and manage the reconstruction of the town, working with the Napier Reconstruction Committee. They were -

John Saxon Barton, a lawyer and accountant.  
Lachlan Bain Campbell, an engineer.

### **RECONSTRUCTION FINANCE:**

- An Earthquake Relief Fund was opened by the Prime Minister and eventually reached \$800,000.
- A Government Grant of \$20,000 built Tin Town.
- \$3,000,000 was given by the Government in the form of loans.

### **ASSOCIATED ARCHITECTS:**

The four architectural practices in Napier in 1931 banded together to share facilities and bring a unity of purpose to the task of rebuilding the town, working in shifts around the clock. But they continued (except in rare cases) to design the buildings individually. These firms were -

**E A Williams**, who favoured the Art Deco style.

**Finch & Westerholm**, which designed mainly in the Spanish Mission style.

**Natusch & Sons**, whose work tended to reflect the growing modern movement.

**J A Louis Hay**, who usually designed buildings inspired by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright, and occasionally Louis Sullivan.

Other architects who worked in Napier in the 1930s were J T Watson who arrived in 1934 and became Borough Architect, and architects from other cities, chiefly Wellington, who were retained by banks, insurance companies and hotel chains to design their buildings throughout New Zealand.

### **THE INNER HARBOUR:**

The Napier area tilted upwards, a maximum of 7 feet (just over 2 metres), and 2230 hectares (5575 acres) were raised to sea level. Since then, apparently, the area has continued to creep up at the rate of 1 cm per year, so that it is now 60 cms (or two feet) above sea level.

### **CELEBRATIONS:**

The Hastings Carnival to celebrate the rebuilding was held in November 1932.

The New Napier Carnival was held in January 1933, by which time most of the main reconstruction was completed or nearly so.

### **THE MARINE PARADE:**

The baths had been built in 1909 and the Paddling Pool in 1914. But no further development took place until just before the Earthquake, with the construction of a second retaining wall nearer to the seashore and a children's playground beside the baths.

After the quake, the vision was extended and the area between the sea wall and the new retaining wall was filled with rubble and the gardens created. The architectural features were built between 1934 and 1939.

### **REFERENCE BOOKS:**

The following books should be available from your local library (\*\* or can be purchased from The Art Deco Shop) -

"**The Shock of '31**" by Geoff Conly (AH & AW Reed, 1980)

"**Before & After**" (Daily Telegraph, 1981)

"**The Hawke's Bay Earthquake**" by Robert McGregor (Art Deco Trust, 1998) \*\*

"**Quake – Hawke's Bay 1931**" by Matthew Wright (Reed, 2001) \*\*

### **THE HAWKE'S BAY MUSEUM:**

The Museum has a permanent exhibition about the 1931 Earthquake which tells the earthquake story in photographs, artefacts and a video – "Survivors' Stories". The Museum is open daily from 10.00am to 4.30pm (9.00am to 6.00pm in summer).

The Berry Historical Library at the Museum has a large collection of earthquake photographs, records, personal stories and publications relating to the earthquake.