

Born and educated in the United States, Lippincott had been involved with the 'Chicago School' of architects influenced by Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. Lippincott worked in Australia where he held a junior partnership in the firm of Walter Burley Griffin who won the competition for the design of Canberra. In 1921 Lippincott established a partnership with draughtsman Edward F Billson and moved to Auckland where his work included the design of Smith and Caughey's Department Store Building (1927-29) and a number of buildings for Auckland University, including the Arts Building (1921). Lippincott visited universities in Canada and the United States in 1927 to gather information for the Massey Agricultural College project. The Dairy Research Building (1929) was the first to be completed and Fletcher Construction began work on the Sir Geoffrey Peren Building and Refectory in that year. The 'Main Science Building' was officially opened by Governor General Lord Bledisloe on April 30, 1931.

Lippincott's design follows the 'form follows function' tenet of the American Chicago School of Architecture, and the abstracted decorative detail is also a mark of the style. The New Zealand Historic Places Trust file describes the design as "essentially an American Collegiate building adapted for New Zealand conditions, utilizing indigenous motifs for decorative effect". In 1950 the building received a major restoration and in 1980 a further restoration was undertaken by Walker, Love and Associates, who won an architectural award for the work. In 2010, the building was renamed after Sir Geoffrey Peren, the founding Principal of Massey Agricultural College, who had campaigned for the establishment of the College. In order to perform seismic strengthening work and the much needed historical restoration of its interior, the building was emptied of occupants in 2012. Under a conservation plan developed in 2009, the building is to be restored largely to its original appearance. The strengthening and restoration work is expected to be completed in 2014 and the building should be ready for academic staff to move back into by the start of 2015. Notable heritage features are the north and south entrances, the wrought iron gates, the entrance doors, the bronze light fittings and the plaster relief panels. The building has historical significance in its association with the development of a scientific approach to agriculture in New Zealand, an industry which has had a key role in the New Zealand economy, and also in its 80 years of use as a tertiary teaching facility. The building has technological value for the design and construction of its concrete frame.

Principal Sources:

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Massey University Refectory Building

Massey University Campus, Tennent Drive, Palmerston North

NZHPT Registration Number:	1187
NZHPT Registration Type:	Historic Place – Category II
NZHPT Registration Date:	02/07/82
City/District Council:	Palmerston North City Council
District Plan Status:	Category 2



Brief History

Auckland-based architect, Roy Alstan Lippincott (1885-1969), was commissioned for the design of three essential founding buildings for the new Massey Agricultural College: a dairy factory, refectory, and main science building (see Old Dairy Factory and Sir Geoffrey Peren Building). The Refectory and Sir Geoffrey Peren Building were designed concurrently as a pair and were erected by Fletcher Construction. The Refectory plans are dated 22 April 1929, and those of the Sir Geoffrey Peren Building, 10 June 1929. The Refectory was completed in early 1930 providing temporary lecture space until the Sir Geoffrey Peren Building was opened in April 1931.

The Refectory is of the Spanish Mission style that is characterised by tile roofs, smooth plastered wall surfaces and semi-circular window heads. This represents a break with such revivalist styles as Neo-Georgian and Stripped Classical that were common in New Zealand at the time. The precedent for this style was R A Abbot's design for the Auckland Grammar School (1916). In comparison Lippincott's design is notable for its simple, dramatic forms and absence of decoration, relying for its interest on the pattern of the windows. A high central wing runs east-west with a tall semicircular-headed window, the centrepiece of the building, at the west end. Built prior to the Napier earthquake of 1931 and before the first structural building code of 1935, the Refectory building has technological value for the design of the reinforced concrete frames with brick and terracotta infill panels. The original contract drawings still exist.