

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ST JAMES THEATRE

- Built 1928
- Architect Henry Eli White
- 2,100 seat theatre
- Ornate Spanish Mission interior
- One of only a few in NZ with 3 levels of seating
- Live theatre & vaudeville performances, quickly transitioned to show talking pictures



Queen Street, 1930s. Ref: 1/2-071816-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand. /records/22694414



- 1950s alterations, including “modernisation” of the entire Queen Street façade
- Queen Elizabeth visited 3x- 1953 Royal Tour, 1963 & 1981
- Odeon Theatre opened on the site in 1957
- Westend Theatre opened above the Odeon in 1966
- Regent opened 1982 for a total of 4 cinemas in the complex



Queen Street, 1956. Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 580 -02270



- St James continued to operate as a venue for live theatre until the late 1990s
- Series of owners in early 2000s
- Closed in 2007 due to fire damage
- Demolition on Queen St began in 2015, and theatre was mothballed in 2016



Queen Street, 2015. Auckland Libraries Heritage Collections 1385-0210



- **Heritage Significance:**
 - Its exemplary design as a picture palace and vaudeville theatre by Henry Eli White
 - Association with development of the motion picture industry, and the rise and fall of vaudeville in NZ
 - Important example of theatre decoration and decorative arts and crafts, noting its high character and quality of surviving original interiors
- **Heritage Protections:**
 - Auckland Unitary Plan – ‘Category A’ scheduled historic heritage place
 - Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT) List Category 1



Auckland Libraries Heritage Image Collection,
<https://digitalnz.org/records/36473903/aucklands-greatest-theatre>



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