



A modest stone plaque in the Anderson's Bay Cemetery marks the burial site of Henry Thomas (Harry) Mandeno, a prominent Modernist architect whose legacy can be seen today in a variety of buildings around Dunedin. The Modernist movement was a reaction to the societal conditions that were perceived as having led to World War 1, and led to a revolution in architectural design, producing "...clean, white, almost mechanical buildings that were designed to suit their function rather than an aesthetic idea."

Harry Mandeno was born in 1879 at Te Awamutu, and was educated at St John's (later Kings) College, Auckland, before moving to Dunedin to live with his sister, and finding work with a builder, Robert Crawford. While working for Crawford he took private night classes in architectural draughtsmanship, and then gained an assistant's position with the prominent architects Mason and Wales. He married Alice Emily Coull in 1908, and set up his own offices in 1911 in the New Zealand Express Company building where he remained in practice for 46 years.

His first major commission was the King Edward Technical College, (1913), and caused him to take on an assistant, Roy Fraser (straight from school), who later became his partner. Closely following, was that most significant of public buildings- the Town Hall. In 1914 Mandeno's design for a new Town Hall and Concert Chamber was selected as the winning entry in the City Council's competition. However, owing to the intervention of the Great War, construction of the building did not commence for some years, by which time Mandeno and Fraser had made significant changes to the original design, including the lowering of the floor of the Concert Hall below that of the main auditorium. The foundation stone was laid on 3 March 1928, and the building was opened on 15 February 1930.

Mandeno and Fraser went on to undertake numerous commercial commissions. Notable buildings include the Santa Sabrina Convent in Northeast Valley (1929), the Cental Fire Station (1930), the NMA Wool store, now Spotlight (1928), and Speight's Brewery in Rattray St (1938). They were appointed architects to the Otago Fire Board, the Bank of New Zealand, the NMA Company, and the South Otago Hospital Board. Of the Bank of New Zealand contract, Mandeno wrote "I think we have erected new buildings for them or almost completely remodelled the old ones in every town of importance in the Otago province..... and in North Dunedin, South Dunedin and Stuart Street".

Mandeno also designed many private residences. Although this was the era of the Great Depression the falling cost of materials and cheap building labour meant that substantial homes could be built at reasonable cost, and the firm produced a variety of styles to suit their clients' requirements. Examples of these that can be seen today include Mandeno House (1936) in George Street, and Tonkinson House (1924), now part of the Manor House Backpackers complex in Manor Place.

Mandeno's last commercial work was the construction of the main block at Wakari Hospital (1957). In 1965, with failing eyesight, he moved to Turangi to live near his daughter, where, in his 90's, he wrote a memoir of his working life. He died in 1972, his ashes returning to Dunedin to rest with his wife.

Prepared for the Historic Cemeteries Conservation Trust of New Zealand (www.cemeteries.org.nz) by Helen Gilmore.

Sources: Michael Findlay interviewed by Charmian Smith, Otago Daily Times 27 Mar 2009; 'New Zealand Biographies' www.artsandcraftsstyle.co.nz; *New Zealand Truth*, 11 Nov, 1926; *Some Reminiscences*, by H.T. Mandeno, 1968; Dunedin City Council www.dunedin.govt.nz;