

**Athenic Building**  
45-47 Courtenay Place



Photo: *Charles Collins, 2015*

**Summary of heritage significance**

- Built in 1922, this building is a rare and distinctive design, being an example of the transition between Classical and Art Deco architectural styles. The decorative motifs on the pilasters and the spandrels are precursors to the elaborate geometric details that became popular with the Art Deco style.
- The building has historic links to the film industry, with many early occupants being agencies and distributors for American production companies.
- The building makes a positive contribution to the streetscape of the Courtenay Place Heritage Area.
- The materials, appearance and workmanship of the façade of this 1922 building and its 1923 4<sup>th</sup> floor addition are largely authentic.

District Plan:	Map 16, Symbol 63/7 ( <i>façade – first floor and above</i> )
Legal Description:	Pt Sec 277 Town of Wellington
Heritage Area:	Courtenay Place Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	Not listed.
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	Martin's Building
Key physical dates:	1922
Architect / Builder:	Architect: H.C. Walton Structural Engineer: S. T. Silver Builder: Alex Campbell & Son
Former uses:	Shops and offices
Current uses:	Offices, pharmacy and bakery
Earthquake Prone Status:	SR167327 (124 Served)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



## 1.0 Outline History

### 1.1 History

The building was originally known as the 'New Martin's Building'. It was designed by little-known architect H.C. Walton for the original owner, Wellingtonian James William Martin. Martin was a boot importer and member of the Courtenay Place Area Association.<sup>1</sup> In drawing up the 1922 plans Walton was assisted by the structural engineer S.T. Silver, who did calculations for beam sizes. The builder contracted for the work was Alex Campbell and Son and the estimated cost of the three-level structure was £6950. An additional storey built the following year cost an £2,000.<sup>2</sup>

The building was originally designed and built for shops and office space. A range of tenants have occupied the building, most for relatively short periods of time. For several decades, until the late 1950s, the building was something of a home to players in the early film and cinematography business, perhaps not surprisingly given the great many picture theatres that had sprung up in the vicinity of Courtenay Place. In the 1920s, Selznick Pictures, an agency of the Australasian arm of the American production company set up by film industry pioneer Lewis Selznick, occupied part of the building, along with local agencies of Universal Pictures and First National Pictures, also American production companies. In the early 1940s Joseph Vinsen sold cinematography supplies, and in the 1950s Murray Hurdle pursued the same line of work from rooms in the building. From the early 1950s until the 1960s, Scammell & Eglington, motion picture engineers, also occupied rooms in the building. Later, in the 1960s, there was an assortment of other occupants, including the Delahunt School of Modelling and, in the 1970s, Jimmy James operated a studio for Ballroom Dancing.

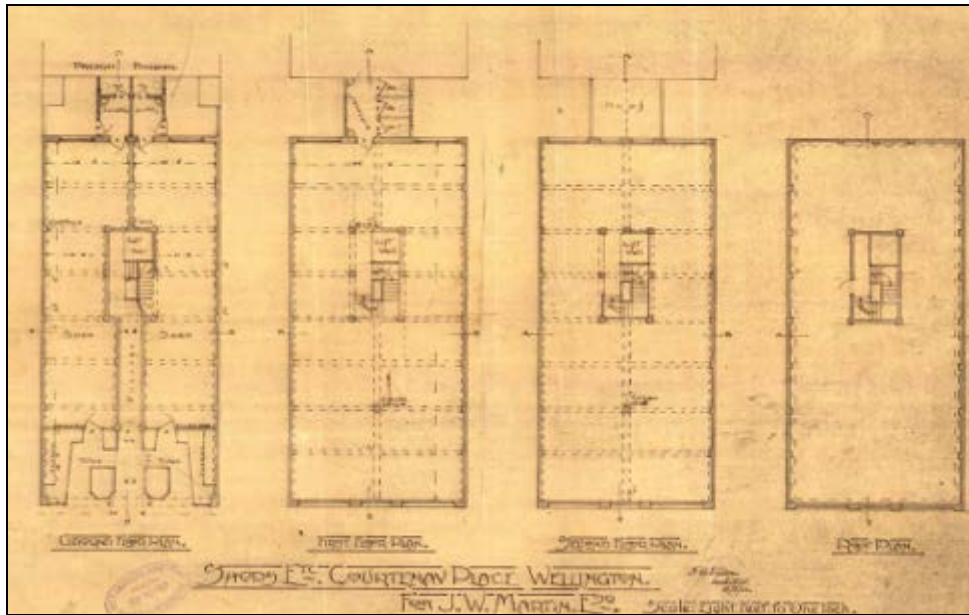
In 1962 Louisa Papageorgiou purchased the building and renamed it the 'Athenic Building', presumably in honour of her Greek heritage.<sup>3</sup> Today the building is still in use as retail and office space.

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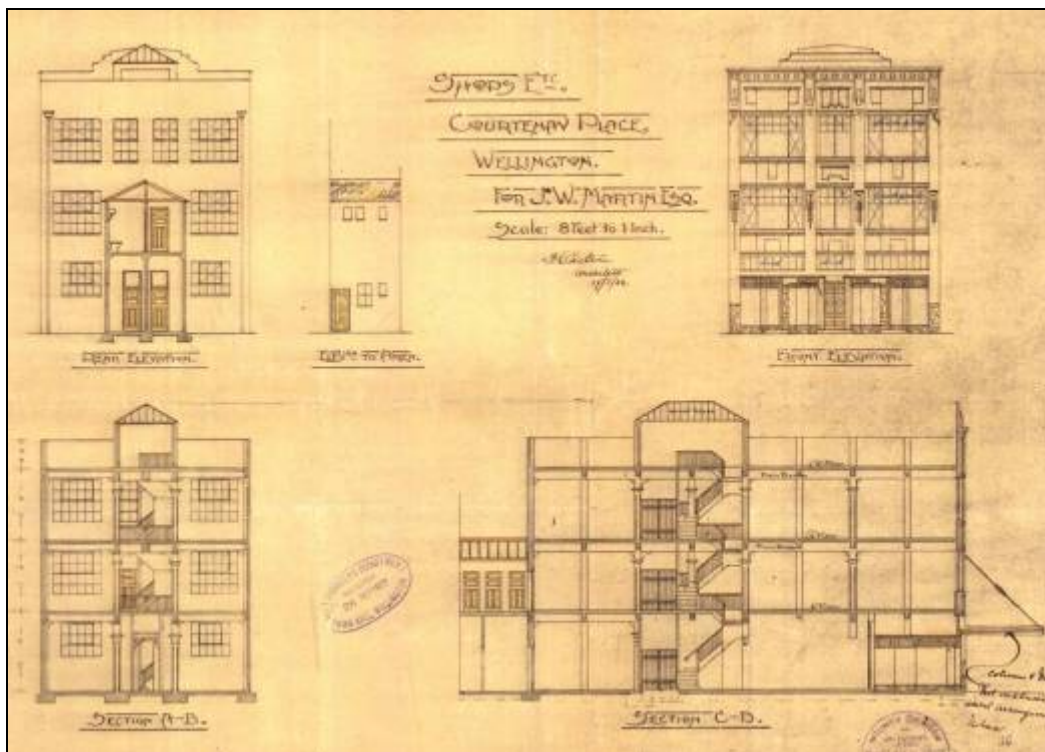
<sup>1</sup> "Courtenay-Place: Meeting Of Area Association", *Evening Post*, Volume CIII, Issue 73, 28 March 1922, Page 8.

<sup>2</sup> "47 Courtenay Place - additional storey", 13 June 1923, 00055:16:A1552, Wellington City Archives.

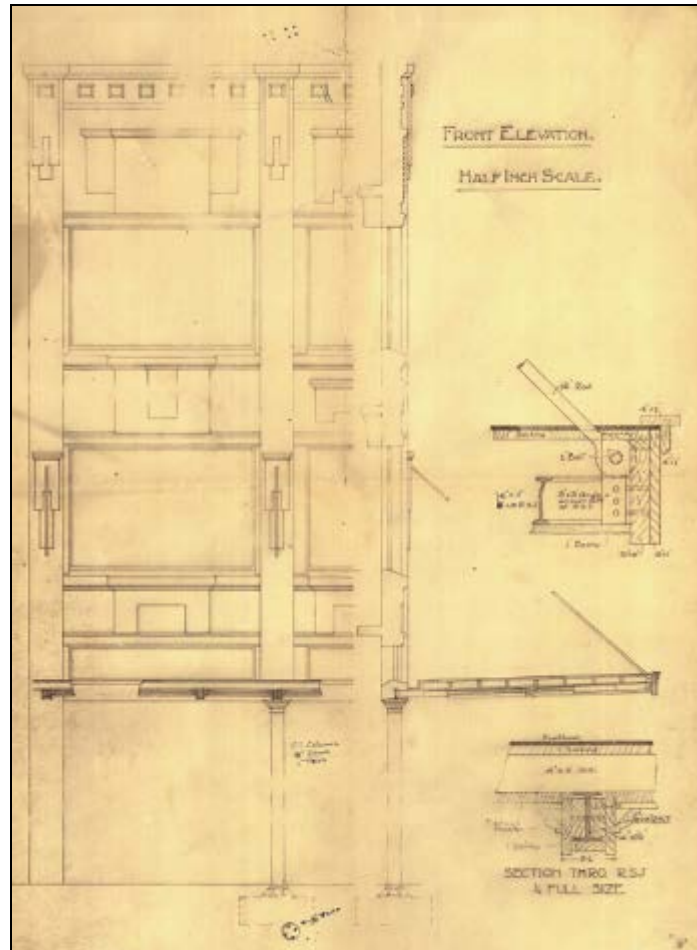
<sup>3</sup> Land Title Service, CT WN 672/64



Original plans of the ground floor, second floor and roof, 1922. (00055:7:A659)



Original plans of front and rear elevations and sections, 1922. (00055:7:A659)



Original plans of front elevation, 1922. (00055:7:A659)





Martin's Building, after the addition of the 4<sup>th</sup> level, c. 1926. Note the references to moving pictures-related enterprises on the west side of the building. (1/2-048562-G, Sydney Charles Smith Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library)

## 1.2 Timeline of modifications

- 1922 Built. (00055:7:A659)
- 1923 Additional storey, cost £2,000. (00055:16:A1552)
- 1934 Sign erected. (00056:146:B13125)
- 1939 Shops remodelled. (00056:234:B19659)
- 1955 Shop alterations. (00056:506:B37917)
- 1972 Building additions and alterations. (00058:808:C36238)
- 1999 Construction of tenancy wall and strengthening of hole in floor. (00078:260:54597)  
Office kitchen renovated to comply with requirements of unregistered eating kitchen. (00078:220:52224)
- 2005 Alterations to ground floor shop. (00078:2212:125369)
- 2006 Restaurant additions and alterations. (00078:2188:145208)

- 2007 Dwelling additions and alterations, level 2. (00078:1988:163597)  
 Restaurant additions and alterations. (00078:2094:161407)
- 2009 Amended head and sill details to level 4 exterior windows.  
 (00078:2861:170341)

### 1.3 Occupation history

The occupants in a selection of years:

- 1924 Selznick Pictures  
 NZ Film<sup>4</sup>
- 1925 Selznick Pictures Ltd.  
 Universal Pictures Corp.  
 Premier (First) National Pictures<sup>5</sup>
- 1941 NZR Booking Office  
 W. Warner  
 Joseph Vinsen (cinematography supplies)  
 Jason F Ewen, taylor  
 Ted Edward (novelties)  
 Jenkins & Co Ltd.  
 EM (soft goods)  
 De Forest Phn films NZ<sup>6</sup>
- 1948/9 Zip Heaters Ltd  
 Sutherland & Wilkinson (motor engineer) <sup>7</sup>
- 1952 Regal Quick Lunch  
 NZR Booking Office  
 Jenkins & Co Ltd (soft goods)  
 Murray Hurdle, (cinematography supplies)  
 Apex Films Ltd  
 Scammell & Eglington (motion picture supplies)  
 FJ Ewen, tlr  
 De Forest Phn films NZ Ltd. <sup>8</sup>
- 1961 Regal Sponge Kitchen  
 Warner Linotype service printers  
 Jason F Ewen (taylor)  
 Service Federation of NZ Industries Ltd  
 Jenkins & Co Ltd EM (manufacturers of ladies and staff wear)  
 Gisbourne Garmets  
 Delahunt Modelling School  
 Scammell & Eglington, motion picture engineers  
 Andrea Theatrette  
 Martin McNeil & Co Ltd (electrical appliances) <sup>9</sup>
- 1967/8 Regal Sponge Kitchen

<sup>4</sup> Wises Directory 1924

<sup>5</sup> Stones Directory 1925

<sup>6</sup> Wises Directory 1941

<sup>7</sup> Wises Directory 1948/9

<sup>8</sup> Wises Directory 1952

<sup>9</sup> Wises Directory 1961/2

- Delahunt School of Modelling  
Jenkins & Co Ltd EM, clothing manufacturer  
Gisbourne Garments Ltd  
Andrea Theatrette Film Services  
Warner Linotype serv, printers  
Edward H. King (ladies wear manufacturers) <sup>10</sup>
- 1975 Jimmy James Studio Ballroom Dancing  
LV Martin & Son  
NZBC Engineering Services  
Cheeryn Lee Coiffures<sup>11</sup>
- 1977 Jimmy James Studio, Ballroom Dancing  
LV Martin & Son  
NZBC Engineering Services<sup>12</sup>
- 1980 Jennifer's Patisserie  
LV Martin and Sons Ltd  
NZBC Engineering Services<sup>13</sup>
- 1995 International Correspondence School  
Jennifer's Patisserie  
UFS Pharmacy  
Wellington Savage Club<sup>14</sup>

#### **1.4 Architect**

Today little is known about architect H.C. Walton.

### **2.0 Physical description**

#### **2.1 Architecture**

The Athenic Building is a tall four-storeyed concrete construction of elegant vertical proportions constructed fully in reinforced concrete walls, floors, columns and beams.

Its street façade is symmetrically arranged about a narrow central bay and features pilasters rising the full height to a pediment, with the intervening spaces divided between bands of windows and decorated spandrel panels. Period lettering appropriately fills three of the spandrel panels with the date and name of the building. The decorative motifs on the pilasters and the spandrels are precursors to the elaborate geometric details that became popular with the Art Deco style. This is a particularly early example of the style that was named in 1925 for the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes* held in Paris in that year, but that had evolved gradually in the early 20thC from a mix of influences including Art Nouveau and Cubism.

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<sup>10</sup> Wises Directory 1967/8

<sup>11</sup> Wises Directory 191975

<sup>12</sup> Wises Directory 1977

<sup>13</sup> Wises Directory 1980

<sup>14</sup> Wises Directory 1995



While shop fronts and the verandah of the Athenic Building have been altered, and the top floor window casements modified slightly, the facade is otherwise in its original form. For all its originality and oddity the building is well proportioned, has a decorative interest and contributes to the townscape of the area.<sup>15</sup>

## **2.2 Materials**

Brick structure, cement render, steel and timber window joinery.

## **2.3 Setting**

The Athenic Building is located in a block of buildings on the south side of Courtenay Place. This section of Courtenay Place is characterised by its continuous line of buildings between Cambridge Terrace and Tory Street which emphasise the original survey line. The buildings are diverse in age and nature (particularly heights) but, despite some particularly intrusive modern buildings, have a high streetscape quality which contributes significantly to the heritage value and character of Courtenay Place as a whole.

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<sup>15</sup> Adapted from: Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area Report*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

## Criteria for assessing cultural heritage significance

### ***Cultural heritage values***

#### **Aesthetic Value:**

***Architectural:*** Does the item have architectural or artistic value for characteristics that may include its design, style, era, form, scale, materials, colour, texture, patina of age, quality of space, craftsmanship, smells, and sounds?

The Athenic Building is an example of the transition period between Classical and Art Deco architectural styles, and is notable for its elegant proportions. The decorative motifs on the pilasters and the spandrels are precursors to the elaborate geometric details that became popular with the Art Deco style.

***Townscape:*** Does the item have townscape value for the part it plays in defining a space or street; providing visual interest; its role as a landmark; or the contribution it makes to the character and sense of place of Wellington?

This building contributes positively to the character and townscape of Courtenay Place.

***Group:*** Is the item part of a group of buildings, structures, or sites that taken together have coherence because of their age, history, style, scale, materials, or use?

The building is part of an important group of heritage buildings which together form the Courtenay Place Heritage Area. Although most of the buildings were constructed in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there are significant differences in age and style among some of the buildings in this group.

#### **Historic Value:**

***Association:*** Is the item associated with an important person, group, or organisation?

***Association:*** Is the item associated with an important historic event, theme, pattern, phase, or activity?

This building was built as part of the rapid commercial development of Courtenay Place in the decades before the Depression.

The building was home to a number of organisations and businesses associated with the film industry in New Zealand, most notably – in the 1920s – the local agencies of American production companies.

#### **Scientific Value:**

***Archaeological:*** Does the item have archaeological value for its ability to provide scientific information about past human activity?

There was pre-1900 human activity on this site. Although some of the sites have been altered by rebuilding or landscaping or sub-divisional change, there is archaeological value in the site.

***Educational:*** Does the item have educational value for what it can demonstrate about aspects of the past?

**Technological:** *Does the item have technological value for its innovative or important construction methods or use of materials?*

**Social Value:**

**Public esteem:** *Is the item held in high public esteem?*

**Symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual:** *Does the item have symbolic, commemorative, traditional, spiritual or other cultural value for the community who has used and continues to use it?*

**Identity/Sense of place/Continuity:**

*Is the item a focus of community, regional, or national identity?*

*Does the item contribute to sense of place or continuity?*

This building is part of a group of commercial buildings in Courtenay Place which contribute to the sense of place and continuity of the Courtenay Place Heritage Area.

**Sentiment/Connection:** *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

**Level of cultural heritage significance**

**Rare:** *Is the item rare, unique, unusual, seminal, influential, or outstanding?*

**Representative:** *Is the item a good example of the class it represents?*

**Authentic:** *Does the item have authenticity or integrity because it retains significant fabric from the time of its construction or from later periods when important additions or modifications were carried out?*

The materials, appearance and workmanship of the façade of this 1922 building and its 1923 addition are largely authentic.

**Local/Regional/National/International**

*Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?*

### 3.0 Sources

CTWN11/222, Land Information New Zealand

CTWN672/64, Land Information New Zealand

Kelly, Michael and Russell Murray, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area Report*. Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006.

Stones Directory 1925 and 1935.

Wellington City Council, *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 1995*. Wellington City Council, 1995.

Wellington City Council, *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. Wellington City Council, 2001.

Wises Directories: 1924, 1941, 1948/9, 1952, 1961/2, 1967/8, 1975, 1980, 1995.

### **Newspapers**

“Courtenay-Place: Meeting Of Area Association”, *Evening Post*, Volume CIII, Issue 73, 28 March 1922, Page 8.

### **Wellington City Archives**

“47-49 Courtenay Place, shops”, October 12, 1922, 00055:7:A659, Wellington City Archives.

“47 Courtenay Place, additional storey”, June 13, 1923, 00055:16:A1552, Wellington City Archives.

“47 Courtenay Place, erect sign”, May 21, 1934, 00056:146:B13125, Wellington City Archives.

“45-47 Courtenay Place, remodel shops”, August 17, 1939, 00056:234:B19659, Wellington City Archives.

“45-47 Courtenay Place, shop alterations”, May 17, 1955, 00056:506:B37917, Wellington City Archives.

“47 Courtenay Place, building additions and alterations”, September 14, 1972, 00058:808:C36238, Wellington City Archives.

“47 Courtenay Place, building alterations – partitions”, September 27, 1972, 00058:810:C36322, Wellington City Archives.

“55 Courtenay Place [45 Courtenay Place], additions and alterations”, 1999, 00078:260:54597, Wellington City Archives.

“55 Courtenay Place [45 Courtenay Place], amendment”, 1999, 00078:339:57151, Wellington City Archives.

“45-47 Courtenay Place, additions and alterations”, April 13, 1999, 00078:220:52224, Wellington City Archives.

“45-47 Courtenay Place, alterations to ground floor shop”, 2005, 00078:2212:125369, Wellington City Archives.

“45 Courtenay Place, restaurant additions and alterations”, 2006, 00078:2188:145208, Wellington City Archives.

“45 Courtenay Place, dwelling additions and alterations, level 2”, 2007, 00078:1988:163597, Wellington City Archives.

“45 Courtenay Place, restaurant additions and alterations”, 2007,  
00078:2094:161407, Wellington City Archives.

“45 Courtenay Place, Amended Plan#1 - Commercial - Athenic Building - Amended  
head and sill details to level 4 exterior windows”, 2009, 00078:2861:170341,  
Wellington City Archives.

## 4.0 Appendix

### Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory	Y	
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
WCC Records – building file		
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)	Y	
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
Plan change?		
Heritage Area Report	Y	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	Y	
Heritage items folder (electronic)	Y	
HPT website		
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	

### Background research

#### WCC Permits

00055:7:A659	47-49 Courtenay Place, shops	Owner: J W Martin. Builder: Campbell and Son. Legal description: Lot 6 DP 277. Application value: £6,950. Note: Known as Athenic building. Architect: F C Walton.	12 Oct 1922
00055:16:A1552	47 Courtenay Place, additional storey	Legal description: Lot 6 DP 277. Owner: J W Martin. Builder: Campbell and Son. Application value: £2,000. Note: Known as the Athenic Building.	13 Jun 1923
00056:146:B13125	47 Courtenay Place, erect sign	Owner: Railway Booking. Builder: M Hawley	21 May 1934
00056:234:B19659	45-47 Courtenay Place, remodel shops	Legal description: Town acre 277. Owner: JW Martin. Builder: Barr and Brown. Application value: £60. Note: Known as the Athenic	17 Aug 1939

		Building.	
00056:506:B37917	45-47 Courtenay Place, shop alterations	Legal description: Part town acre 277. Owner: G Busato. Builder: D J Barton. Application value: £60. Building name: Athenic Building.	17 May 1955
00058:808:C36238	47 Courtenay Place, building additions and alterations	Legal description: Lot 6 DP 277. Owner: LV Martin. Builder: Hall and Kiel Limited. Application value: \$370. Note: Athenic Building	14 Sep 1972
00058:810:C36322	47 Courtenay Place, building alterations - partitions	Legal description: Lot 6 DP 277. Owner: NZBC. Builder: A Hay Limited. Application value: \$22000. Note: Athenic Building	27 Sep 1972
00078:260:54597	55 Courtenay Place [45 Courtenay Place], additions and alterations	Owner: P Ulysses Trust Partnership. Applicant: Bullit. Application value: \$10,000. Note: Work Description: Construction of tenancy wall and strengthening of hole in floor.	1999
00078:339:57151	55 Courtenay Place [45 Courtenay Place], amendment	Applicant: Paul Ryan. Notes: Amendment to building consent 54597.	1999
00078:220:52224	45-47 Courtenay Place, additions and alterations	Work description: Renovate office kitchen to comply with requirements of unregistered eating kitchen. Owner: Wellington Performing Arts Centre (Tenant). Applicant: Lucy Ullrich. Legal Description: Pt Sec 277 Town of Wellington SO 11143. Application Value: \$6,000. Note: Known as the Athenic Building.	13 Apr 1999
00078:2212:125369	45-47 Courtenay Place, alterations to ground floor shop	Owner: Angelos Basil Papageorgiou. Applicant: Bruce Warden Architects. Legal description: Pt Sec 277 Town Of Wellington. Application value: \$45,000. Note: UFS Pharmacy.	2005
00078:2188:145208	45 Courtenay Place,	Owner: Elefteria Zavos.	2006



	restaurant additions and alterations	Applicant: Freear Philip Ltd. Legal description: Pt Secs 277 and 277 Town Of Wellington. Application value: \$50,000.	
00078:1988:163597	45 Courtenay Place, dwelling additions and alterations, level 2	Owner: Georgina Artemis Papageorgiou. Applicant: King & Dawson Ltd. Legal description: Pt Sec 277 Town Of Wellington. Application value: \$45,000.	2007
00078:2094:161407	45 Courtenay Place, restaurant additions and alterations	Owner: Georgina Artemis Papageorgiou. Applicant: Sam Martin. Legal description: Pt Secs 277 and 277 Town Of Wellington. Application value: \$50,000.	2007
00078:2861:170341	45 Courtenay Place, Amended Plan#1 - Commercial - Athenic Building - Amended head and sill details to level 4 exterior windows.	Legal description: PT SECs 277 & 277 TOWN OF WELLINGTON. Owner: Ulysses Trust. Applicant: Capital Construction Ltd. Designer: Foster Architects. Project value: \$20,000.	2009



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