

Commercial Building

120 – 126 Courtenay Place



Image: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- 120-126 Cuba Street façade is the remnant of a row of Edwardian Baroque shop/dwellings that is a good representative example of the style. This façade has been incorporated into a larger six-storey apartment block that has little architectural or aesthetic value.
- This building is associated with the early social and economic history of Wellington, helping to tell the story of Wellington's development. The building, while originally a retail premises, has for many years housed restaurants and cafes – with the Shanghai restaurant being something of a Wellington institution.
- The Edwardian Baroque façade has some group value with the Classical commercial buildings in the nearby Courtenay Place Heritage Area, and for its stylistic similarity to the St James Theatre, its near neighbour on Courtenay Place.

District Plan:	Map 16, reference 68
Legal Description:	Lot 1 DP 83448
Heritage Area:	
HPT Listed:	Category 2, reference 3640
Archaeological Site:	NZAA Central City R27/270
Other Names:	
Key physical dates:	Built: 1904, 1908 (addition)
Architect / Builder:	Architect: Penty and Blake
Former uses:	Retail and Commercial - Offices
Current uses:	Retail and Commercial – Restaurant/Café/Tearoom
Earthquake Prone Status:	Outside Earthquake Prone Policy SR 268398

Extent:



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

The façade at 120 – 126 Courtenay Place is a vestigial remnant of a two-storey row of Edwardian Baroque shop/dwellings designed by architects Penty and Blake.

The building was originally constructed for Thomas Young, a Wellington solicitor who was in partnership with Joseph Tripe in a firm named Young and Tripe. Wellington City archives show an application for consent for three shop/dwellings at 120-126 Courtenay Place in 1904.¹ It appears that these buildings were leased out and occupied by a variety of different retail tenants including Brailsford's Mercers, Messrs Gallate Bros Tearooms, and Kilpatrick's Grocers.² In 1908 Penty and Blake were again commissioned to design an addition for the building. This was a fourth, two-storey shop/ dwelling added to the western end of the existing building; this shop has three windows on the first floor. Drawings made in 1908 show that all four shops had a living room and kitchen on the ground floor behind the shops, and three bedrooms, a bathroom, and a sitting room on the first floor. In the yard behind the fourth shop was a bake house with a large brick oven attached to it.³

In 1996 most of the original building was demolished to make way for a new apartment building. The façade of the Penty and Blake design is now all that remains of the 1904 and 1908 buildings.

¹ WCA 00053-108-6030

² Evening Post, Volume CVIII, Issue 52, 29 August 1929, Page 8; Dominion, Volume 5, Issue 1257, 12 October 1911, Page 6; Maoriland Worker, Volume 3, Issue 76, 23 August 1912, Page 5.

³ Wellington City Council. '120-126 Courtenay Place, Shanghai Restaurant'. *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Precincts*. (Wellington City Council. 2001) COURT19.

1.2 Timeline of modifications



- | | |
|------|--|
| 1904 | Building permit issued – Applicant: John Wood, Owner: T. Young, Architect: Pentty and Blake (00053:108:6030) |
| 1908 | Building addition - construction of fourth shop |
| 1996 | Demolition of building – retention of façade (00078: 45: 25773) |

1.3 Occupation history

Not assessed

1.4 Architect

Penty and Blake⁴

The Architect Francis Penty was born in Yorkshire in 1841. He was educated in York where he studied for a profession, prior to becoming a pupil of Mr J E Oates. On completing his article he worked in Liverpool for 5 years before moving to Manchester. His 7 years here saw the erection of many major projects. In 1887 Penty moved to New Zealand, establishing a firm in Wellington. In his first ten years in this country he had designed no less than 150 private homes. Amongst early works were Convalescent Home, Oriental Bay, a warehouse for Townsend and Paul, Victoria Street and the Wellington Woollen Company Warehouse in Jervois Quay, all in Wellington. Penty also spent time as a Wellington City Councillor during the 1890s.

E M Blake (1865-1929) was born in Madras, India, the son of a missionary who four years later immigrated to New Zealand. Educated at Dunedin and Christchurch he was articled to T S Lambert of Christchurch, and was architect for the Exhibition Building 1889 in which for 'efficient service' he was presented with a silver medal by Lambert. Shortly after completing his articles he worked for about two years in Sydney, and then returned to NZ for health reasons, he then went back to Melbourne, winning two architectural competitions and carrying out other major works.

Returning to NZ in 1894 he was for 3 years architect to the South Canterbury Education Board, and also practised in Timaru. Back in Wellington he entered the Public Works Department's architectural office in 1901. The partnership of Penty and Blake won the competition for the design of the original building at Victoria University of Wellington. Penty and Blake won second prize in the design for the Dunedin Public Library and in association with James Bennie was placed third in the competition for Parliament Buildings. He died in Wellington. His grandson, Keith Blake practices as an architect in Wellington.

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture⁵

This building (or at least the Courtenay Place Façade) is two-storey and Edwardian Baroque in design style. The three pediments on the front façade, which break the line of the cornice, are supported on pairs of fluted pilasters. Between the pilasters are the windows which are framed by Gibbs surrounds. The windows have moulded architraves, and keystones, and three have rusticated surrounds and are framed by Ionic pilasters, with pediments of triangular and segmental shapes. A dog toothed moulding runs the length of the façade below a moulded cornice.

The building has been added to – the easternmost three-quarters of the building is the original section and housed three shops. In 1908 Penty and Blake designed the matching addition containing a fourth shop at the western end with three windows on the first floor.

⁴ Wellington City Council, '120-126 Courtenay Place, Shanghai Restaurant', *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 1995*, (Wellington City Council, 1995) C.

⁵ Wellington City Council, '120-126 Courtenay Place, Shanghai Restaurant'. *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001*. (Wellington City Council. 2001) COURT19.

The two-storey early/original façade has been incorporated into a larger six-storey apartment block that has little architectural or aesthetic value. In 2007 the building appeared on an Architecture Centre list of the ten worst buildings in Wellington.⁶

2.2 Materials

The building was originally constructed with masonry walls, timber floors and roof, and a cast iron verandah, the majority of which is now gone.

2.3 Setting

The two-storey façade at 120 Courtenay Place retains some design and architectural value and contributes to the Courtenay Place streetscape. The reduction of the Edwardian commercial building to little more than a façade, and the construction of a large and clumsy apartment building directly behind it, have a negative impact on the Courtenay Place streetscape.

⁶ 'Dominion Post- Ten Worst Buildings' dated 12th April 2007, Architecture Centre website accessed February 2014 <http://architecture.org.nz/2007/04/12/dominion-post-ten-worst-buildings/>

Sources

Wellington City Council. '120-126 Courtenay Place, Shanghai Restaurant'. *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 1995*. Wellington City Council. 1995.

Wellington City Council. '120-126 Courtenay Place, Shanghai Restaurant'. *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001*. Wellington City Council. 2001.

Wellington City Archive

00053-108-6030

Papers Past

Dominion, Volume 5, Issue 1257, 12 October 1911, Page 6

Evening Post, Volume CVIII, Issue 52, 29 August 1929, Page 8

Maoriland Worker, Volume 3, Issue 76, 23 August 1912, Page 5

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?*

120-126 Cuba Street façade is the remnant of a row of Edwardian Baroque shop/dwellings that is a good representative example of the style. This façade has been incorporated into a larger six-storey apartment block that has little architectural or aesthetic value.

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?*

The reduction of this Edwardian commercial building to little more than a façade to a large apartment building with little aesthetic or architectural value has a negative impact on the Courtenay Place streetscape.

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 Edwardian Baroque façade has some group value with the Classical commercial buildings in the nearby Courtenay Place Heritage Area, and for its stylistic similarity to the St James Theatre, its near neighbour on Courtenay Place.

Historic Value:

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

This building was designed by the prominent architectural firm of Penty and Blake.

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

This building is associated with the early social and economic history of Wellington, helping to tell the story of Wellington's development. The building, while originally a retail premises, has for many years housed restaurants and cafes – with the Shanghai restaurant being something of a Wellington institution. This is an important element of Courtenay Place's development as the entertainment district.

Scientific Value:

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

This building is included in the NZAA Central City Archaeological area R27/270.

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?

The Edwardian façade has some value for its contribution to the sense of place and continuity of the Courtenay Place Streetscape.

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?*

This building is a good example of the Edwardian Baroque style, designed by a prominent Wellington architectural firm. It is representative of the style that was prominent at the time of its construction and is consistent with the other buildings on Courtenay Place.

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?*

Although the majority of this building has been demolished to make way for new apartments, the façade retains authenticity of materials, design, and craftsmanship.

Local/Regional/National/International

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

This building is important at a local level for the contribution that it makes to the Courtenay Place streetscape. The Edwardian Baroque façade is a lively composition and is in a reasonably authentic condition.

3.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

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

Background research

Insert any relevant background information into this section. This may include:

- *Additional plans, such as those for alterations*
- *Chunks of text from other sources such as Cyclopedia of NZ, Papers Past*
- *Additional images*