

Arco House

45-47 Cuba Street



Photo: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- Arco House is an Edwardian Stripped Classical commercial building that was adapted in the mid-1950s as a retail unit, and warehouse for a manufacturing jeweller and optician/lens grinder.
- The building retains a historic association with builders James Trevor and Co. and also with Arthur Cocks & Co. a wholesale jeweller, optician and importer, for which the building was renamed in the 1950s. The plans to convert the building into premises for Arthur Cocks & Co. survive and give a good insight into the work of a mid-to-late 20th century manufacturing jewellery and optician.
- The plain building façade above ground floor level has had few intrusive or unsympathetic alterations over the past 100 years and makes a positive contribution to the sense of place and continuity of the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

District Plan: Map 16, Symbol 74/1
Legal Description: Lot 5 DP 845
Heritage Area: Cuba Street Heritage Area
HPT Listed: Not listed.
Archaeological Site: Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:
Key physical dates: 1908
Architect / Builder: James Trevor and Sons
Former uses: Commercial, retail
Current uses: Commercial
Earthquake Prone: 124 Served (SR160373)
Status: Bdg StrengthInv Notice Issued 9/08/2011

Extent: *WCC Cityview 2012*



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

This building was built by James Trevor and Sons Ltd in 1908. Trevor was a well-known Wellington contractor known as a skilful builder and hard worker, with 'fine hearty Yorkshire ways' who built 'monuments to his industry' all over Wellington.¹ Trevor owned the building until 1923 when Mary Smith and Sarah Smith purchased the property.² The ownership of the building was transferred several times until Arthur Cocks & Co. purchased the building in 1953.³

Arthur Cocks & Co was a wholesale jeweller, optician and importer. The company had been established in Sydney, Australia in 1899 by Arthur Cocks who was not only an established businessman, he was also a jeweller and politician, Congregational Church layman, deacon, lay preacher and Sunday school superintendent. The jewellery and manufacturing business was restructured in 1911 and by 1914 had branches in Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane. The business opened an office in New Zealand at an unknown date before 1953. Cocks remained managing director until 1939.⁴

When Arthur Cocks & Co purchased the building they renamed it 'Arco House'. They occupied all three floors and the basement. Shortly after purchasing the property they undertook an extensive renovation to plans designed by architect William J. McKeon.⁵ The refurbishment included removal of the acroterion, replacement of the parapet above the cornice and adding their name 'ARCO' to the sign. They also installed everything necessary for their operation, including a showroom with glass and plywood cabinets, a workshop fitted with grindstones and sinks, a staffroom, a packing room with machinery and a record room.⁶ This renovation gave the building much of its current character.

From 1973 James Smith's occupied the building for 15 years as part of their Cuba Street operation until they closed their doors in 1988.⁷ The building's ownership has been transferred several times since James Smith vacated the premises. Past owners include Sheehans Wines & Spirits Ltd and Legend Holdings Ltd.⁸ In 1996 the building was purchased by 'Arco House' and it remains in their ownership today.⁹ Largely because of the permanence of the signage the building has retained its name.

¹ 'Obituary', *Dominion*, Volume 8, Issue 2461, 14 May 1915, Page 7.

² Land Title Service, CT WN 92/231

³ Ibid.

⁴ Greta Gerathy, "Cocks, Sir Arthur Alfred Clement (1862–1943)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, accessed June 20, 2012, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cocks-sir-arthur-alfred-clement-5704/text9643>

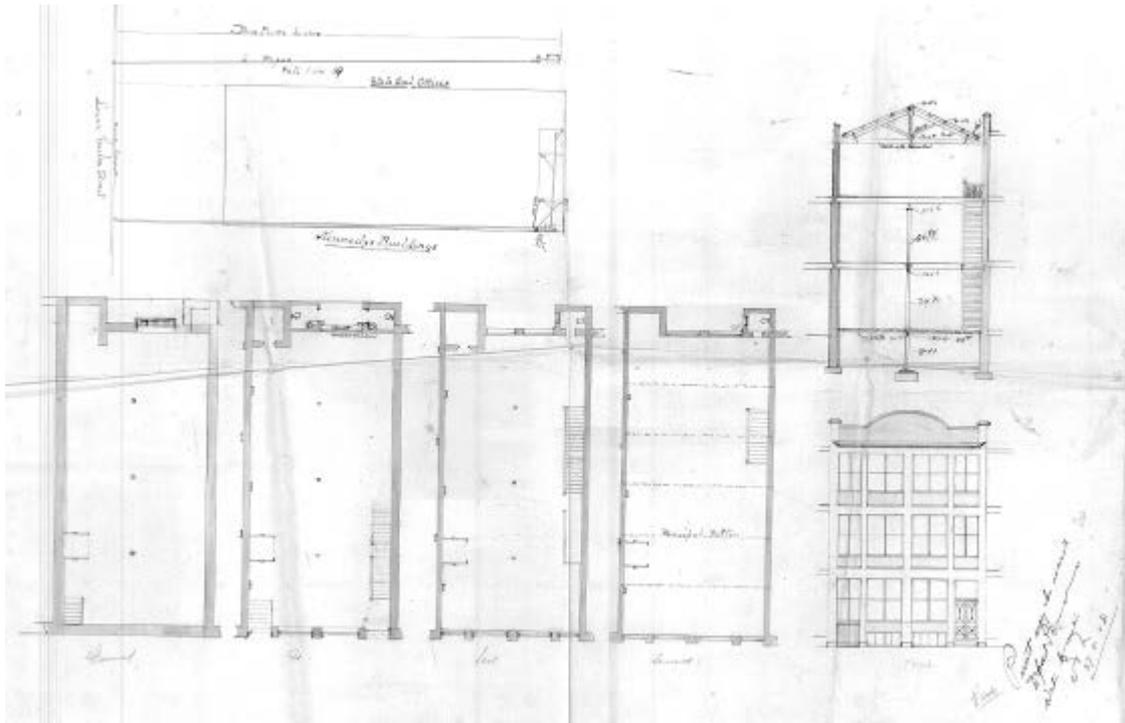
⁵ "45-47 Cuba Street, alterations & renovations to building", April 5, 1954, 0056:477:B35964, Wellington City Archives.

⁶ Ibid.

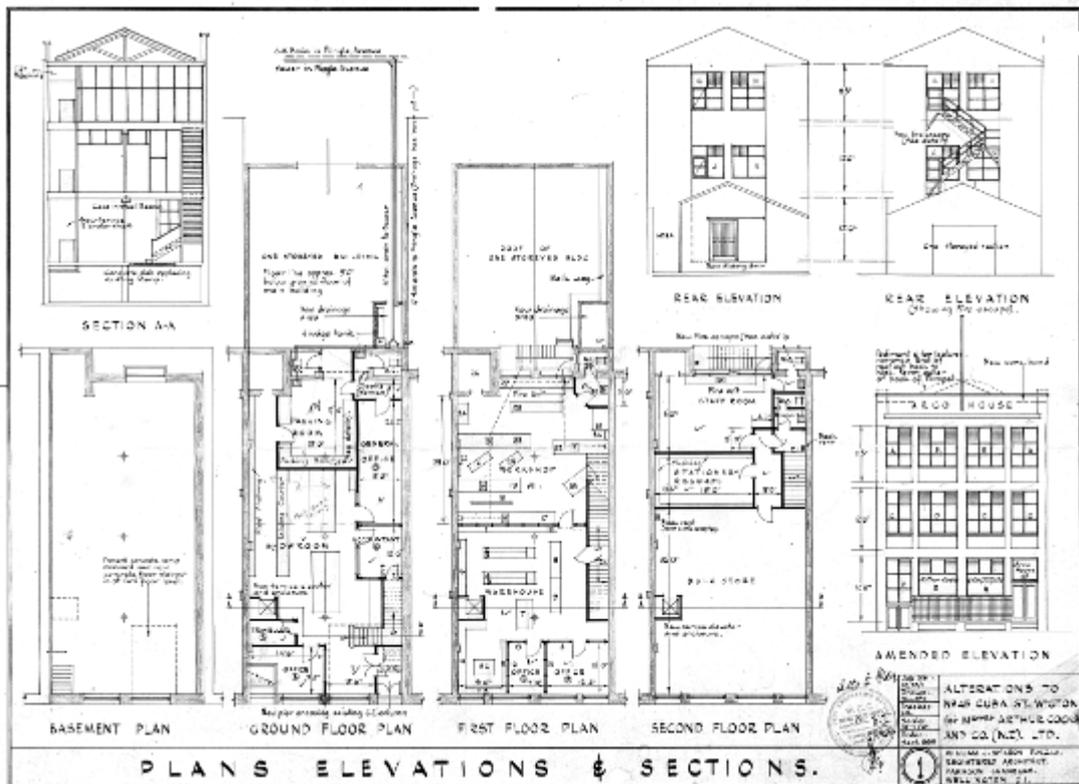
⁷ Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (blocks 1-3)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

⁸ Ibid.

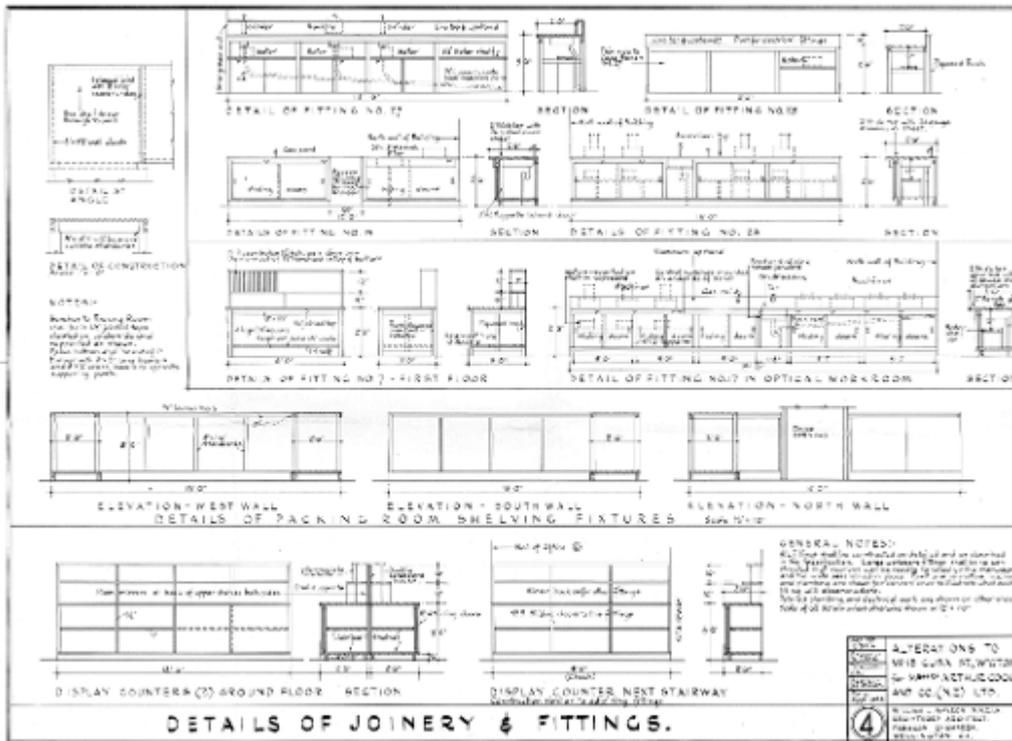
⁹ Land Title Service, CT WN73/163



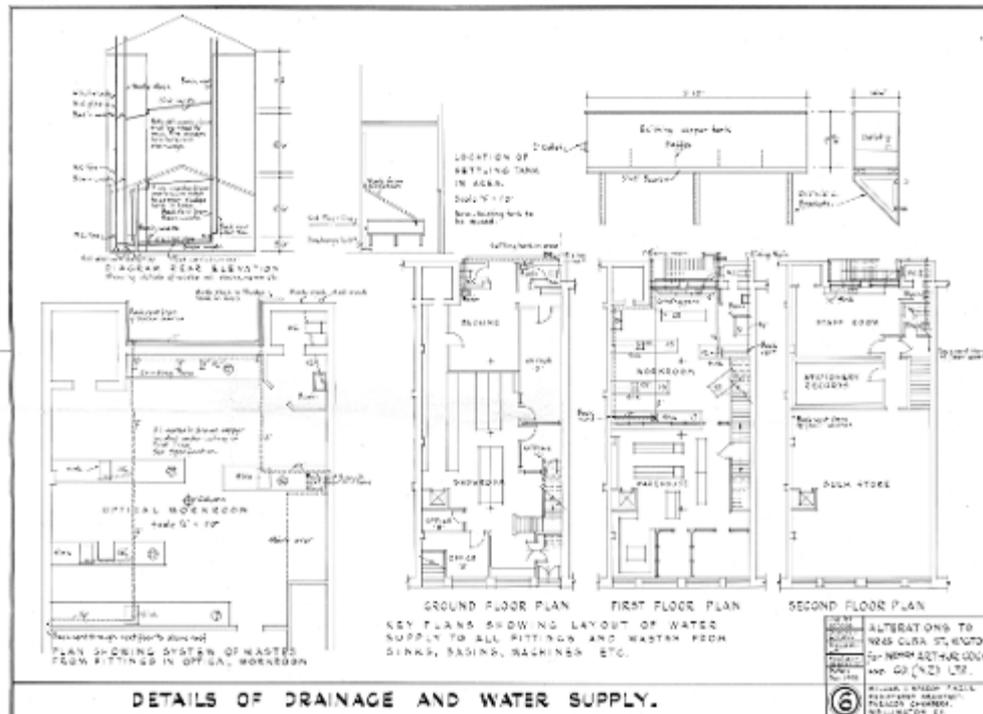
Original plans, 1908.
(00053:145:8060)



Alterations showing the elevations and sections, 1954.
(00056:477:B35964)



Alterations showing details of the joinery and fittings, 1954.
 (00056:477:B35964)



Alterations showing the sinks and grinder machinery, 1954.
 (00056:477:B35964)

1.2 Timeline of modifications

- 1908 Building constructed by James Trevor and Sons. (00053:145:8060)
- 1933 Sign erected. (00056:140:B12650)
- 1954 Major alterations to a design by Architect William J. McKeon - window sashes altered, roof replaced, parapet reduced, new lift installed and pediment removed. (00056:477:B35964)
- 1978 Opening between 1st floor party-wall with adjacent 49 Cuba created. (00058:1164:C50142)
- 1979 2nd floor tearoom altered. (00058:1196:C51361)
- 1989 Business additions and alterations – shop, including a new street entrance. (00059:315:E18109)
- 1994 Seismic strengthening to basement, ground floor and first floor. Undertaken by Dunning Thornton Consultants. (00060:161:5888)
Verandah added. (00060:161:5889)
- 2001 New entry to basement, alterations to the ground floor and 1st & 2nd floors. Shop front altered. (00078:1451:77346)

1.3 Occupation history

- 1910–1925 Lawrence & Hanson, electrical engineers & importers.¹⁰
- 1915-1925 McPhee & Co, woollen warehousemen.¹¹
- 1940-1955 Sutherland & Wilkinson, motor engineers & garage.¹²
- 1940-1951 Zip-Heaters Ltd.¹³
- 1955-1990 Cocks & Co, wholesale opticians, jewellers & importers.¹⁴

1.4 Architect

Trevor and Sons almost certainly designed the building themselves. The original 1908 building permit notes that James Trevor and Sons as both applicant and owner.¹⁵

¹⁰ *Stone Street Directory*, 1910/11 and 1925.

¹¹ *Stone Street Directories*, 1915/16 and 1925.

¹² *Stones Street Directories* 1940 and 1955.

¹³ *Stones Street Directory* 1940 and *Wises Street Directory* 1951.

¹⁴ *Wises Street Directories* 1955 and 1990.

¹⁵ “45-47 Cuba Street, building”, April 27, 1908, 00053:145:8060, Wellington City Archives.

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

Arco House was designed as an Edwardian Stripped Classical commercial building comprising of three storeys above ground plus a basement. The building was adapted in the mid 1950s and became the retail outlet and workshop for a manufacturing jeweller and optician/lens grinder.

The parapet appears to have been altered in circa 1953 when the original parapet, with a simple unadorned pediment, was replaced with a horizontal band with raised lettering forming the words 'ARCO HOUSE'. There are two rectangular rainwater 'hoppers' at each end of the dentilled cornice that connect to what appears to be modern PVC rainwater pipes. The large windows to the street façade are set out symmetrically with two wide central windows flanked by a tall / narrow window all of which are set over recessed panels. The windows and panels on the first floor are slightly shorter than those on the ground, and this was perhaps designed deliberately to give an optical illusion of increased height, although this subtlety is not shown on the original plans. The windows on the first and second floor appear to have been replaced in 1953 when the building was refurbished to form the show rooms, offices, workshops and warehouse for 'Arco House'.

The ground floor shop front and entrance to the offices above have since been much altered and the glazed verandah is an intrusive modern intervention.

2.2 Materials

Probably brick masonry with applied render over; the original floor between ground and basement appears to have been concrete; the floors above appear to have been timber joists spanning onto steel structural beams supported by cast iron columns; the roof structure appears to be a timber roof truss. A site visit is required to verify.

2.3 Setting

Arco House is a carefully proportioned Stripped Classical building that, because of its scale, form and proportion and its deeply-recessed windows, sits comfortably with its more elaborate neighbours. It is unfortunate that the building's poorly designed modern glass verandah detracts somewhat from its streetscape quality.¹⁶

Arco House is located in Block 1 of the Cuba Street Heritage Area and this first block of Cuba Street is also the tallest, with buildings between three and eight stories high (the median height is expressed by the five storey James Smiths building). Although the street is widest in this block, the proportions of the tall buildings create a strong sense of enclosure to the street, in contrast to the more open aspect of the other parts of the street. Most of the buildings in this block have attached verandahs, some original, which come in a variety of styles, do not conform to any continuous elevation line, and contribute to a general visual untidiness in the lower part of the streetscape. This street-level clutter has, however, been improved by the recent alterations to the landscaping of lower Cuba Street including the removal of the plethora of bus shelters directly in front of the former James Smith department store building.

¹⁶ Adapted from Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Report*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

The character of the block is perhaps best illustrated by James Smiths building where the Art Deco façade turns around the corner from Manners Street and meets into a strong 50s modernist box along Cuba Street. The other buildings in this block are a heterogeneous mix of ages, types and styles which assemble to create a varied and interesting streetscape. The overall heritage and streetscape value of the block is reasonably high as many prominent Edwardian commercial buildings – Columbia Hotel, Kennedy building, T.G. McCarthy Trust, Last Footwear and others – remain to reinforce the line of the street wall and provide a high level of detail and visual variety to that street wall. Some of the modern buildings make a positive contribution to the street wall, including the former MED building and James Smiths. These buildings represent a quite diverse group of purposes and architectural styles which neatly encapsulates the history of 20th century development in this area.¹⁷

¹⁷ Ibid.

3.0 References

CT WN 92/231, Land Information New Zealand

CT WN 373/163, Land Information New Zealand

Gerathy, Greta. "Cocks, Sir Arthur Alfred Clement (1862–1943)", *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Accessed June 20, 2012.

<http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cocks-sir-arthur-alfred-clement-5704/text9643>

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

Stones Street Directory – 1910/11, 1915/16, 1920, 1925, 1940 and 1945.

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

Wises Street Directory – 1950/51, 1955, 1961/62, 1967/68, 1971/72, 1975 and 1990.

Newspapers

"Obituary", *Dominion*, Volume 8, Issue 2461, 14 May 1915, Page 7.

Wellington City Archives

"45-47 Cuba Street - building", 27 April 1908, 00053:145:8060, Wellington City Archives.

"45-47 Cuba Street, erect sign", 10 Oct 1933, 00056:140:B12650, Wellington City Archives.

"45-47 Cuba Street - alterations & renovations to building", April 5, 1954, 00056:477:B35964, Wellington City Archives.

"45-47 Cuba Street, proposed opening - 1st floor between Arco House and James Smith", 30 Aug 1978, 00058:1164:C50142, Wellington City Archives.

"45-47 Cuba Street, alterations to tearoom - 2nd floor", 23 Mar 1979, 00058:1196:C51361, Wellington City Archives.

"45 Cuba Street, business additions and alterations – shop", 1989, 00059:315:E18109, Wellington City Archives.

"45-47 Cuba Street, strengthening", 21 Jul 1994, 00060:161:5888, Wellington City Archives.

"45-47 Cuba Street, verandah", 21 Jul 1994, 00060:161:5889, Wellington City Archives.

"45-47 Cuba Street, Sign", 1 Nov 1995, 00061:154:14958, Wellington City Archives.

"45-47 Cuba Street, additions and alterations", 2001, 00078:1451:77346, Wellington City Archives.

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?*

Arco House is an Edwardian Stripped Classical commercial building that was adapted in the mid-1950s as a retail unit, and warehouse for a manufacturing jeweller and optician/lens grinder. The street façade has little applied decoration, when compared with its neighbour at 41 – 43 Cuba Street, but the building has value as a good 'transition-piece' between the elaborate Edwardian building to its north and the modern curtain wall former James Smith department store to its south.

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 building makes a positive contribution to lower Cuba Street, and the proportions and scale which provide a good counterpoint to the buildings around it.

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 makes a positive contribution to the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

Historic Value:

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

The building retains a historic association with James Trevor and Co., a successful building firm in late 19th and early 20th century Wellington, and Arthur Cocks & Co. a now defunct wholesale jeweller, optician and importer, for which the building was renamed in the 1950s.

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

The building is associated with the development of commerce in Cuba Street in the Edwardian era partly due to the introduction of electric trams to the city centre.

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 subdivisional change, there is archaeological value in the immediate surrounds.

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 building façade above ground floor level has had few intrusive or unsympathetic alterations over the past 100 years and makes a positive contribution to the sense of place and continuity of the Cuba Street 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?*

The building is a good representative example of a stripped Classical commercial building.

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 building façade above verandah level has had relatively few alterations since the building was refurbished in the 1950s

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 of local importance for its contribution to the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

4.0 Appendix

Background research

Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory	Y	
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	N	Not listed
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	Y	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	Y	
Heritage items folder (electronic)		
HPT website	N	Not listed
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)		

WCC Permits

00053: 145:80 60	45-47 Cuba Street, building	Owner: James Trevor and Sons. Applicant: James Trevor and Sons.	Building Permit/Consent	27 Apr 1908
00056: 140:B12 650	45-47 Cuba Street, erect sign	Owner: H Maunder. Builder: Owner	Building Permit/Consent	10 Oct 1933
00056: 477:B3 5964	45-47 Cuba Street, alterations & renovations to building	Owner: Arthur Cocks and Co. Builder: Parsons and Capper Limited. Legal description: Lot 5 DP 845, Lot 1 DP 7842. Application value: £11,900. Note: Arco House.	Building Permit/Consent	05 Apr 1954
00058: 1164:C5 0142	45-47 Cuba Street, proposed opening - 1st floor between Arco House and James Smith	Legal description: Lot 5 DP 845, Lot 1 DP 7842. Owner: James Smith Limited. Builder: E R Glass Construction Limited. Application value: \$7500. Note: Arco House	Building Permit/Consent	30 Aug 1978
00058: 1196:C5 1361	45-47 Cuba Street, alterations to tearoom - 2nd floor	Legal description: Lot 5 DP 845, Lot 1 DP 7842. Owner: James Smith Limited. Builder: ER Glass Construction Limited. Application value: \$90000. Note: Arco House	Building Permit/Consent	23 Mar 1979

00059: 315:E18 109	45 Cuba Street, business additions and alterations - shop	Note: New street entrance Index to scans: 1-2 Plans	Building Permit/Consent	1989
00060: 161:588 8	45-47 Cuba Street, strengthening	Owner: Legend Holdings Ltd. Applicant: George Wilkinson. Designer: Dunning Thornton. Legal description: Lot 5 DP 845, Lot 1 DP 7842. Application value: \$45,000. Notes: Contains information relevant to building consent 5889 (Series 00060).	Building Permit/Consent	21 Jul 1994
00060: 161:588 9	45-47 Cuba Street, verandah	Legal description: Lot 5 DP 845, Lot 1 DP 7842. Owner: Legend Holdings Ltd. Applicant: George Wilkinson. Designer: Dunning Thornton. Application value: \$5,000. Note: Only contains application form. All plans, specifications and correspondence are on building consent 5888 (Series 00060).	Building Permit/Consent	21 Jul 1994
00061: 154:149 58	45-47 Cuba Street, Sign		Building Permit/Consent	01 Nov 1995
00078: 1451:77 346	45-47 Cuba Street, additions and alterations	Owner: Arco House Ltd. Applicant: Arco House Ltd. Legal description: Lot 5 DP 845, Lot 1 DP 7842. Application value: \$30,000. Note: New entry to basement, ground floor and level 1 and 2.	Building Permit/Consent	2001