

Barber's Buildings

123-125 Cuba Street



Photo: Charles Collins, 2014

Summary of heritage significance

- Built in 1910, this three storey Edwardian Baroque edifice has significant architectural value for its lively and decorative Beaux Arts façade and is one of the most distinctive buildings in the Cuba Street Heritage Area.
- This building has historic value for its association with the Barber family, who operated their dye business from this site for over 70 years, and also for its designer, notable Wellington architect William Crichton. This building also has a long history of use as a physical culture and dance studio, has been home to Footnote Dance since the 1980s.
- This distinctive building is part of a significant group of Edwardian commercial buildings on Cuba Street which make significant contribution to the Cuba Street Heritage Area.
- The building façade has had relatively few intrusive modern alterations and retains substantial areas of original building fabric.

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

This building was built in 1910 for Barber & Co. as a dye works, replacing an earlier wooden building on the site. The building was designed by Architect William Crichton, of the firm Crichton and McKay.

Barber's was established at this same site on Cuba Street in 1863¹² as a dyeing and cleaning business by William P Barber, who came to New Zealand in the 1850s aboard the ship *Oliver Laing*.³ In the 1860s there was a five-roomed house, "built of the best totara timber"⁴ on the site, and the Te Aro stream ran across the section.⁵

WP Barber retired in 1882⁶ and the business was taken over by his eldest son, William Henry Peter Barber.⁷ William Barber became a Councillor for Te Aro Ward in 1891 and served at least two terms.⁸ In 1893 William was joined by his younger brother EJ Barber who became a partner in the business.⁹

By the 1890s a two-storey timber building had replaced the earlier totara house on the site. In 1897 the premises was described as "being of wood and iron, and two stories high."¹⁰ The business was successful, with trade extending "all over the Colony, and occasionally even to Australia."¹¹

¹ "Barber, W, and Co.", *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District]*, 1897. Accessed 25 June 2012. <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d42-d2.html>

² It is worth noting that in 1867 advertisements appear in the *Wellington Independent* for WP Barber & Co.'s, Wellington Dye Works, at Taranaki Place stating that the business was originally established in 1844 (see *Wellington Independent*, Volume XXII, Issue 2560, 20 August 1867, Page 1)

³ "Councillor William Henry Peter Barber", *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District]*, 1897. Accessed 25 June 2012. <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d11-d18.html>

⁴ *Progress*, Volume V, Issue 10, 1 August 1910, Page 352

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ "Barber, W, and Co.", *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District]*, 1897.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ "Councillor William Henry Peter Barber", *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District]*, 1897. Accessed 25 June 2012. <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d11-d18.html>

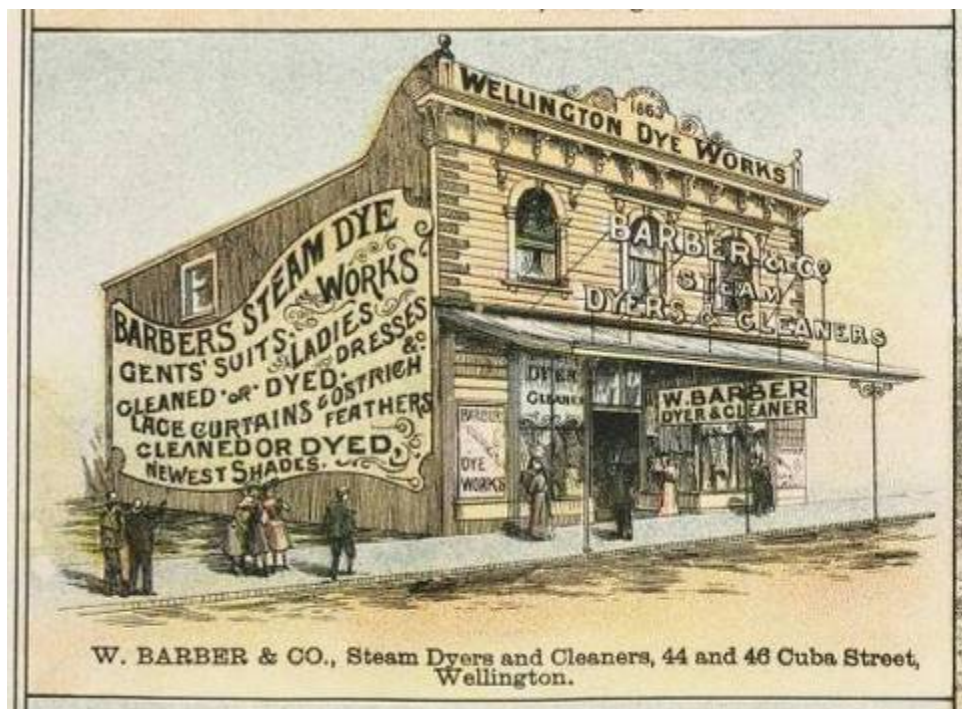
⁹ "Barber, W, and Co.", *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District]*, 1897.

¹⁰ "Barber, W, and Co.", *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District]*, 1897.

¹¹ *Ibid.*



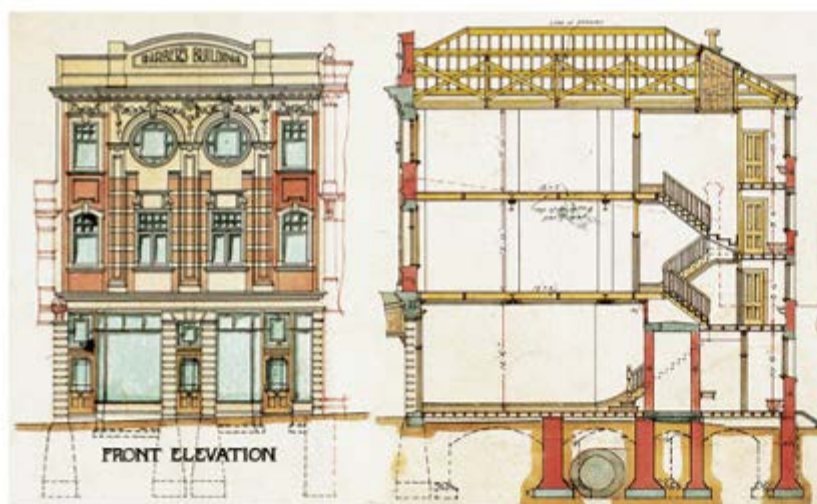
Looking along Cuba Street, Wellington, in 1870. Shows the Wellington Dye Works on the right. The Nag's Head and Wesleyan Church in the distance, to the left. (ATL 1/2-032512-F)



Barber & Co. Steam Dyers and Cleaners, 44 and 46 Cuba Street. Shows the exterior of the shop. Detail from a 1895 advertisement. (ATL D-002-007-001)



Cuba Street, Wellington, circa 1896, showing the premises of Barber & Co, Steam Dyers and Cleaners at no. 46. The sign painted on the top of the building reads "Established 1863. Wellington Dye Works". On the left, at no. 42, is the business of `J Walker - The noted fancier' (a bird shop). To the right, at no. 48a, just out of the picture, is the shop of Arthur Lilley, tailor. Photograph taken by the Tyree Brothers, circa 1890 (ATL 1/2-011651-G)



Barber Building, Cuba St, Wellington, 1910

Architects: Crichton and McKay.

NZHT: Register no. 3630. Category II.

Designed for W H P Barber as a dye works with rentable retail space on the ground floor. The building is listed on the heritage register of the Wellington City Council and has a category II listing with the New Zealand Historic Places Trust.

1910 Barber Building elevations and section. Image: Crichton and McKay, Bullyment Fortune¹²

¹² Bullyment Fortune website accessed July 2012

http://www.bullymentfortune.co.nz/BFA_archives_Barber_1910.html

When the present building was erected in 1910, the façade was described as being “in the modern Renaissance style, of red brick with cement enrichments.”¹³ The ground floor was designed as two large shops, divided down the middle, with a wide entrance to the upper floors. The dye works were transferred to Petone, and one of the shops became the firm’s headquarters in Wellington.¹⁴ Barber & Co continued to operate from the shop at 125 Cuba Street until the mid 1930s.¹⁵ The building was owned by the Barber family until 1943.¹⁶

Various tenants have occupied the shops and rooms at 123 – 125 Cuba Street (or 123a – 125 as the address was known historically). Occupants include JWM Harrison, ‘Physical Culturist and Masseur’¹⁷ who leased a space for his studio where he taught curative exercises. Also of interest are the Wellington Jewish Women’s Club, who used the top floor as a clubroom in the 1920s,¹⁸ The Unity Centre, The New Zealand Communist Party and the Maritime Social Club.

From the 1930s to present, the upper floors of the building have been used as a dance studio. Dorothy Daniels Academy of Dancing occupied the top floor of the Barber’s building for about 40 years, and was “one of the focal points of ballet life in Wellington.”¹⁹ As well as being the headquarters of her flourishing school, the studio was the venue for some Royal Academy of Dancing ballet examinations. Over the years many intensive tuition courses and rehearsals by other theatre or dance groups were held in the studio.²⁰ By 1980 the studio was occupied by the Deidre Tarrant Academy of Dancing.²¹ Now operating as Footnote Dance, the studio occupies both the first and second floor of the building.

Timeline of modifications

- 1910 Construction (8722)
- 1937 Verandah in yard (B17297)
- 1960 Verandah and fire escape (rear of building) (C9474)
- 1964 Reinstate verandah (Cuba Street frontage) (C15984)
- 1996 Alterations to façade (SR16920)
- 1999 Strengthening (SR57692, SR53783). The street façade and building were strengthened. The building owner, Ian Borrin, received \$25,000 from the WCC Earthquake Risk Building Fund.

¹³ *Progress*, Volume V, Issue 10, 1 August 1910, Page 352

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Stones* 1915-16, 1920, 1925, 1930.

¹⁶ CT340/114

¹⁷ *Evening Post*, Volume XC, Issue 95, 20 October 1915, Page 1

¹⁸ *Evening Post*, Volume CIV, Issue 121, 18 November 1922, Page 4

¹⁹ Jennifer Shennan. 'Daniels, Margaret Dorothy Louise - Biography', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 19-Jan-12

URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/5d2/1>

²⁰ Jennifer Shennan.

²¹ *Wises* 1980, 1985

1.2 Occupation history²²

NB: This list is not exhaustive

Barber & Co (125), dyers & cleaners (Stones 1915-16, 1920, 1925, 1930).

After 1935 various tenants in shop at 125 and floors above. Includes:

Victoria Laundry Co (Stones 1935, 1940)

Blake Electrical (Wises 1950-51, 1955, 1961-62)

New Zealand Communist Party (Wises 1955, 1961-62, 1967-68)

Unity Centre Inc (Wises 1955, 1961-62, 1967-68)

Maritime Social Club (Wises 1961-62, 1967-68)

Dorothy Daniels Dancing Academy (Wises 1971-72, 1975)

Deidre Tarrant Academy of Dancing (Wises 1980, 1985, NEED 1990).

Various tenants in shop at 123.²³ Includes:

Stamford & Co, ladies' hairdressers (Stones 1915-16, 1920)

1.3 Architect

William Crichton (1862-1928) was born in Cornwall, England. He trained as an architect before immigrating to New Zealand in 1879. Upon arriving he joined the Colonial Architect's Office.²⁴

In 1891 he was made redundant from this position and started his own architectural firm. This was the same year that his design for the Wellington Municipal Library (now demolished) was successful in a competition of 22 entrants. In 1897 Crichton was described as having "designed and superintended the erection of a large number of private dwellings, shops and warehouses in and around the city."²⁵

In 1901 Crichton joined with James Hector McKay to form the firm Crichton and McKay. In the 1920s the firm became Crichton, McKay & Haughton when Vivian Haughton joined the firm.²⁶

Crichton, McKay and Haughton became a prominent architectural firm responsible for numerous domestic and commercial buildings in Wellington, such as the Huddart Parker Building (1923) and the Dominion Building (1926-1927).²⁷

²² Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (blocks 1-3)*.

²³ Historically the address was known as 123a-125 Cuba Street, so this listing may refer to the building next door which was known as 119-123 Cuba Street.

²⁴ "Crichton, William", *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District]*, 1897. Accessed 18 June 2012. <http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d33-d3.html>

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Historic Places Trust, "Crichton, McKay & Haughton", *Professional Biographies*. Accessed 18 June 2012. <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?ID=47>

²⁷ Ibid.

2.0 Physical description

2.0 Architecture

The Barber's Building is a three storey Edwardian Commercial building and the lively, decorative Edwardian Baroque /Beaux Arts façade is one of the finest and most elaborate in the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

The original ground floor shop fronts and rusticated columns have unfortunately been replaced in a mish-mash of styles and finishes, but the façade above verandah level is substantially unaltered. The façade here is carefully articulated and the windows and ornamentation are deeply modelled. The unique pair of top storey lunette windows high-light the symmetrical composition of its façade and make a singular contribution to the character of the street. The square-headed and segmentally-arched windows on the upper floors are also prominently moulded and recessed. The façade is notable for the combination of rendered brick ornamentation, and for the polychromatic bands of rendered and plain facing brick, and three of these elaborate polychromatic pilasters tie the central window elements together. Although the polychromatic effect has been altered at the base of the pilasters where the brick and render has been over-painted. The building is capped by an arched pediment, with a heavily-decorated cornice below, and stucco festoons. This intriguing façade makes a strong positive contribution to the lively Edwardian character of the Cuba Street precinct.²⁸

The building is comprised of two separate retail units on the ground floor, and dance/ballet studios on the floors above. The interior retains significant areas of original building fabric particularly in the stairwell which features a fine timber stair, skirting, panelled doors (including ironmongery) and the t&g timber wall linings.

2.1 Materials

The construction is load-bearing brick masonry with timber roof trusses. There is a modern sprung dance floor at the second floor level.

2.2 Setting

This block is the principal pedestrian zone of Cuba Mall and includes the local landmark of the Bucket Fountain and a variety of landscaping, trees and street furniture and a number of interesting and important buildings.

This block and the next have the highest concentration of Edwardian commercial buildings in Cuba Street and consequently have the highest architectural, heritage and streetscape value in Cuba Street. The most important of the surviving Edwardian buildings are found on this block, including the Wellington Working Men's Club, Murphy's Irish Bar (no. 119-123), Barber's Building and the Hotel Bristol.

Barber's Building is between the Bristol Hotel to the south, and no. 119-121 (a two-storey building designed by Crichton in 1900) to the north.

²⁸ WCC Heritage Building Inventory 2000 ref Cuba 12; Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Report*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

The characteristic scale of buildings on this block is three tall stories, a level defined by the Wellington Working Men's Club and reflected in the Farmers Building, Hotel Bristol, Barbers Building, and others. There are a number of two-storied buildings, including Murphy's Irish Bar (no. 119-123), Iko Iko and the former Gear Meat building; the tallest building on the block is no. 126 (occupied by the Friendly Bakery) at a high four stories.

Most of the buildings have flat-roofed verandahs attached at the first floor which have a strong similarity of form and scale; several buildings have fire-escapes leading down to these verandahs. The verandah to Murphy's Irish Bar has been converted to a balcony with a discrete metal railing.²⁹

References

"Barber, W, and Co.", *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District]*, 1897. Accessed 25 June 2012. <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d42-d2.html>

"Councillor William Henry Peter Barber", *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District]*, 1897. Accessed 25 June 2012. <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d11-d18.html>

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Shennan, Jennifer. 'Daniels, Margaret Dorothy Louise - Biography', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 19-Jan-12
URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/5d2/1>

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

Archives

CT340/114

Stones 1915-16, 1920, 1925, 1930.

Wises 1980, 1985

Newspapers

Evening Post, Volume XC, Issue 95, 20 October 1915, Page 1

Evening Post, Volume CIV, Issue 121, 18 November 1922, Page 4
Progress, Volume V, Issue 10, 1 August 1910, Page 352

Wellington Independent, Volume XXII, Issue 2560, 20 August 1867, Page 1)

²⁹ Adapted from: Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Cuba Street 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?*

This three storey Edwardian Baroque / Beaux Arts design has architectural value for its inventive and decorative façade. It is one of Wellington's most idiosyncratic heritage buildings.

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 distinctive building makes a strong contribution to Cuba Street. It sits in the heart of the highest concentration of Edwardian commercial buildings in Wellington, the centrepiece of the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

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?*

This building is part of a row of Edwardian commercial buildings on the east side of Cuba Street which makes a strong positive contribution to the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

Historic Value:

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

This building has historic value for its association with the Barber family and notable Wellington architect William Crichton.

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

This building is associated with the strong growth and development of Cuba Street during the Edwardian period, which resulted in the building of many fine commercial buildings.

Scientific Value:

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

It is known that there has been pre-1900 human activity on the site; hence this site has potential archaeological value.

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 Edwardian commercial buildings on Cuba Street which contribute 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?*

This building has a long history of use as a physical culture and dance studio. For many years the studio was one of Wellington's focal points of ballet life, and since the 1980s it has been home to Footnote Dance.

Level of cultural heritage significance

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

This building is rare for its design, which makes it one of the most distinctive of all of Cuba Street's many fine heritage buildings.

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

The building is also strongly representative of the architecture and history found in Cuba Street.

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 façade of this building remains largely intact with a high level of original building fabric, despite modifications and the addition of a balcony.

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, as it contributes to the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

3.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

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

Background research

“Councillor William Henry Peter Barber”, *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District]*, 1897. Accessed 25 June 2012. <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d11-d18.html>

Councillor William Henry Peter Barber, one of the members representing Te Aro Ward, was born in Wellington, and is the son of Mr. W. P. Barber, formerly of Wellington, but now living in retirement at the Upper Hutt. Mr. Barber, senior, came to the Colony in the fifties, per ship “Oliver Laing,” and in 1863 started the dyeing and cleaning business in Cuba Street, now being so successfully carried on by his sons, of whom Councillor Barber is the senior. As a councillor, Mr. Barber is attentive to the business of the city, and popular with his fellow members. He holds seats in the Fire Brigade and Private Streets Committees. He was first elected a member of the council in September' 1891, and is now serving his second term. For the past seven years he has been a director of the Wellington Woollen Company, in which position his technical knowledge is very valuable, and for the past four years he has been chairman of directors of the Wellington Opera House Company. As an Oddfellow, too, Councillor Barber has taken a prominent position, being a Past Grand of the Southern Cross Lodge, American Order.



Fig. 77.—Cuba Street in the 'seventies. Barber's dye works to the right. The Nag's Head and Wesleyan Church in the distance, to the left.

Fig. 77.—Cuba Street in the 'seventies. Barber's dye works to the right. The Nag's Head and Wesleyan Church in the distance, to the left. Figs. 76 and 77 by courtesy "Evening Post."
(Cyclopedia of NZ website <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/WarEarl-fig-WarEarl219c.html>)

Progress, Volume V, Issue 10, 1 August 1910, Page 352

<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=P19100801.2.13.4&srpos=3&e=-1910-1910-10-P-1---0barber->

New building for Barber & Company, Cuba Street, of three stories. The elevation is to be in the modern Renaissance style, of red brick with cement enrichments. The ground floor will be divided into two large shops, with a wide entrance to the upper floors. The advantage of natural lighting will be secured by a system of light area space at the back, and adequate provision is made in the designs for ventilation. It is interesting to note that the site of the proposed building has been occupied by the firm since 1865, when Mr. W. H. P. Barber's father established the business there. The section was then occupied by a five-roomed house, built of the best totara timber, and the lot—house and section—was purchased for £150. Now the valuation of the property is about £7000. When the section was purchased, the Te Aro Stream ran across the section. The new premises are to be erected by Messrs. Rose and Muir, and the contract price is close on £3000. The works have been transferred to Petone, and one of the above shops will be used by the firm as their headquarters in Wellington.

Evening Post, Volume LXXXVI, Issue 113, 8 November 1913, Page 16

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Evening Post, Volume LXXXVIII, Issue 17, 20 July 1914, Page 1

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Evening Post, Volume XC, Issue 26, 30 July 1915, Page 1

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Evening Post, Volume XC, Issue 95, 20 October 1915, Page 1

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