

## George & George Building (Former)

161-163 Cuba Street



161-163 Cuba Street (WCC November 2011)



Photos: Charles Collins, 2014

### Summary of heritage significance

- This building is a representative example of an Edwardian masonry commercial building in a sparsely detailed neo-Classical style. The Cuba Street and Swan Lane facades of the building remain largely unchanged with a high level of original detailing.
- Designed by notable Wellington architect JM Dawson for prominent Wellington businessman and benefactor TG Macarthy.
- This building has historic value for its long use as a drapery (about 50 years), in particular as the head store of George and George, a very successful Wellington drapery business.
- Occupies a prominent position on the corner of Cuba Street and Swan Lane. The scale, materials and style of this building contribute to the townscape of Cuba Street.
- This building is part of a group of Edwardian commercial buildings on Cuba Street which contributes positively to the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

District Plan:	Map 16, Symbol 84
Legal Description:	Lot 1 DP 7095 and Pt Sec 154 Town of Wellington
Heritage Area:	Cuba Street Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	Category II, reference 3628
Archaeological Site:	
Other Names:	Craft Village (DP) Floriditas (current restaurant)
Key physical dates:	1911-12
Architect / Builder:	J M Dawson / Trevor Brothers
Former uses:	Commercial
Current uses:	Commercial / residential (?)
Earthquake Prone Status:	Building A: s124 served, expires 29/3/2025 (SR163475)

Extent:



## 1.0 Outline History

### 1.1 History

This building was designed by Wellington architects, King and Dawson, for TG Macarthy. The builders were Trevor Brothers, and the permit was issued in September 1911, less than a year before Macarthy's death.

The plans of this three-storey building show the ground floor as a single shop space, with the two upper floors similarly un-partitioned.

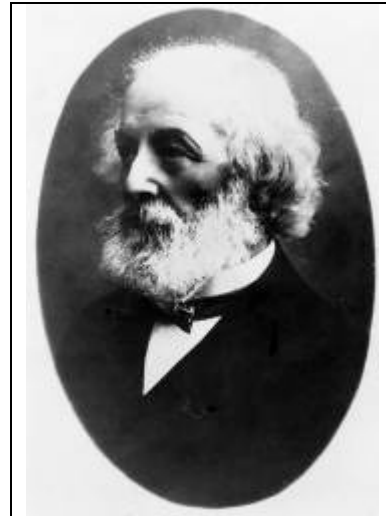
In October 1912 the *Evening Post* reported that the building, which had not been occupied since it was built, was to be taken by George and George, drapers.<sup>1</sup> The article stated that JM Dawson, by then the architect to the Macarthy Estate, had drawn up plans for a two storey addition at the back (however this was later changed to three storeys). Various retail departments were to occupy the building, except the top floor which was reserved for workrooms.

<sup>1</sup> *Dominion*, Volume 6, Issue 1585, 31 October 1912, Page 3

The building was a drapery for about 50 years. George and George began business in Newtown in 1902. 161-163 Cuba Street became the company's head store and by 1916 they had branches in Brooklyn, Hataitai, Petone and Newtown. George and George occupied the building until the 1960s. The building continued as a drapery, with City Markets taking on the lease. After this time the building was occupied by a number of different manufacturers and businesses. In 2002 the ground floor was fitted out for 'Floriditas' restaurant.

**Thomas George Macarthy (c1833/4-1912)**

Thomas George Macarthy was born in London in 1833 or 1834. In the 1850s he went to the goldfields in Victoria, Australia. In the 1860s he arrived in Dunedin and then went onto Charleston on the West Coast where he established a brewery and invested money in the Reefton mines.<sup>2</sup> He was listed as a director of two mining companies: the Golden Bar Gold Mining Company in 1882,<sup>3</sup> and the Koranui Coal Mining Co in 1877.<sup>4</sup>



TG Macarthy (Alexander Turnbull Library, Reference: PAColl-0479-2)

In 1877 Macarthy moved to Wellington where he purchased the Mace and Arkell brewery in the Old Custom House Street (Bond Street) along with the interest in a group of public houses belonging to the brewery<sup>5</sup> for the sum of £20,000.<sup>6</sup> He also acquired hotels which were closely linked to his principal business, and other urban property.<sup>7</sup> In 1883 he purchased a brewery in Tory Street, and this appears to have been renamed 'Macarthy's City and Pheonix Brewery'.

Macarthy became a respected member of the business community. He was elected to the board of directors of the Bank of New Zealand in 1894 when the location of its head office was shifted from London to Wellington, and served until 1898.<sup>8</sup> He was prominent in the Wellington Building and Investment Company Limited,<sup>9</sup> the Wellington and Manawatu Railway Company, the Wellington industrial exhibition of 1896 to 1897.<sup>10</sup> He was also involved in the company formed in the 1890s to build a new opera house to replace the one that was destroyed in the 1879 "Opera House fire" which also destroyed four hectares of property in and around Manners, Cuba and Dixon Streets in Wellington.<sup>11</sup>

In 1897, at age 63, Macarthy married 23-year-old Mary Ellen Fitzsimons. There were no children of the marriage. When Macarthy died in 1912 he left half his large estate to his wife, and half for the purpose of establishing a trust for 'charitable and educational purposes or institutions in the Provincial District of Wellington'.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Cyclopedia Co. Ltd, "Mr. Thomas George Macarthy", in *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District* (Wellington: The Cyclopedia Company Limited, 1897), accessed September 5, 2012, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d28-d17.html>

<sup>3</sup> "Concert", *Colonist*, Volume XXVI, Issue 3529, 2 August 1882, Page 3

<sup>4</sup> *West Coast Times*, Issue 2492, 26 March 1877, Page 3

<sup>5</sup> *Grey River Argus*, Volume 21, Issue 3079, 28 June 1878, Page 2

<sup>6</sup> *Colonist*, Volume XX, Issue 2417, 11 July 1878, Page 3

<sup>7</sup> G.R. Hawke, "Macarthy, Thomas George – Biography", in the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated September 1, 2010, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2m2/1>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Evening Post*, Volume XXXII, Issue 28, 19 June 1886, Page 2

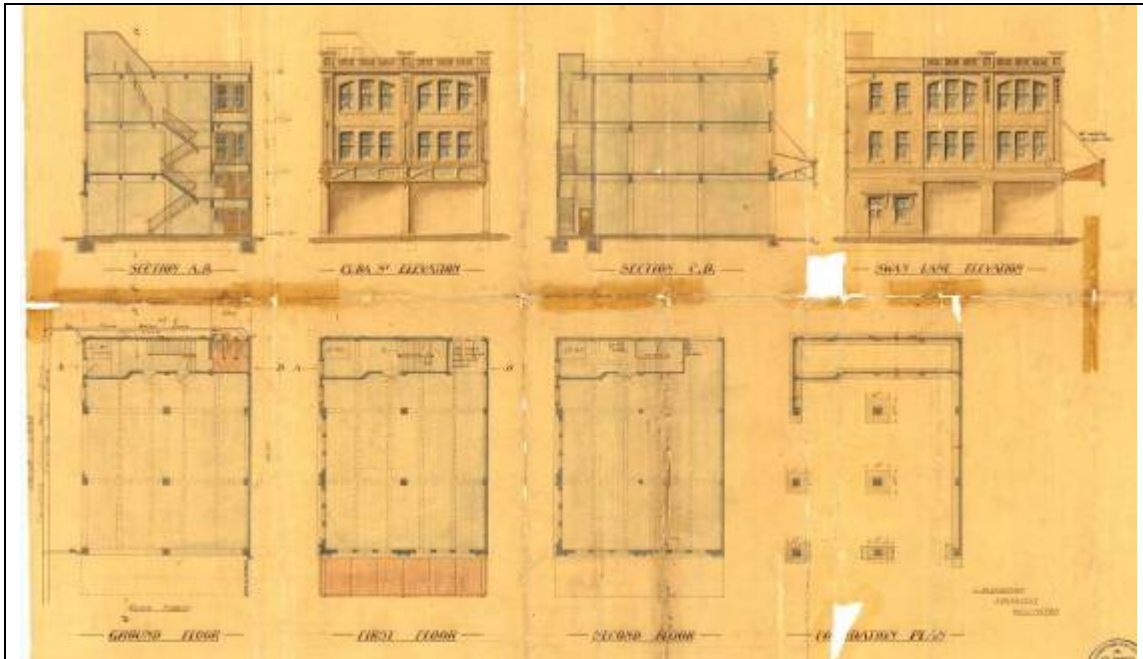
<sup>10</sup> "Wellington Industrial Exhibition", *Evening Post*, Volume LI, Issue 109, 8 May 1896, Page 2

<sup>11</sup> William Main, *Wellington Through a Victorian Lens* (Wellington: Millwood Press, 1972)

<sup>12</sup> Hawke, "Macarthy, Thomas George – Biography."



The Trust continues to operate, and even owns some of the original buildings. At 2012, the total income distributed since inception of the Trust is over \$58.61 million.<sup>13</sup>



Detail from JM Dawson's 1911 plans (WC Archives 00053:166:9142)



Looking up Cuba Street from the corner of Garrett Street c1920s. Part of no. 161-163 is visible at the front right, with the sign for George and George above the verandah. (Photo: Smith, Sydney Charles. Ref: 1/2-048557-G. Alexander Turnbull Library <http://beta.natlib.govt.nz/records/22707136>)

<sup>13</sup> "History of the Thomas George Macarthy Trust" Public Trust website, accessed September 22, 2012, <http://www.publictrust.co.nz/grants-and-scholarships/how-do-i-find-one/grants/thomas-george-macarthy-trust/centenary-celebrations/about-thomas-george-macarthy-trust>

## 1.2 Timeline of modifications

- 1911 Construction (00053:166:9142)
- 1912 Extension to building - Additions to the rear of the building along Swan Lane. The extension was originally planned to be a two storey extension facing onto Swan Lane. This was altered to three storeys instead (00053:171:9448).
- 1927 New verandah (00056:40:B3946)
- 1934 Renovations and alterations (00056:145:B13036)
- 1955 New lift shaft and pent house extension (00056:521:B38797)
- 1962 Ground floor shop alterations (00058:234:C10495)
- 1964 Fire escape (00058:340:C14617)
- 1965 Storeroom added to rear (00058:413:C17672)
- 1966 Building alterations (00058:476:C20498)
- 2002 Interior fit-out for restaurant (00078:1071:86685)
- 2005 Additions and alterations, ground floor. Re-plumbing of new counter; removal of partition in front of chillers near front door (00078:1411:124776)

## 1.3 Occupation history

George & George, drapers (Stones 1915-16, 1920, 1925, 1930, 1935, 1940, 1945, Wises 1950-51, 1955)

City Markets, drapers (Wises 1961-62).

From 1960s occupied by a number of manufacturers and businesses.

Roberston & Son Ltd, manufacturers' agents (1st fl) (Wises 1967-68, 1971-72)  
Merson Industries Ltd, soft goods manufacturers (1st fl) (Wises 1967-68, 1971-72)  
Weigel Patterns (NZ) Ltd, dress patterns (1st fl) (Wises 1967-68, 1971-72)  
Armstrong & Springhail Ltd, office supplies (gd fl) (Wises 1967-68, 1971-72)  
British Typewriters Ltd (gd fl) (Wises 1967-68, 1971-72)  
Trimline Garments Ltd (2nd fl) (Wises 1971-72, 1975)  
Beechy & Underwood Ltd (Wises 1975, 1980)  
Golden Horn (Wises 1975, 1980)  
Craft Village (Wises 1985, 1990)<sup>14</sup>

## 1.4 Architect

### Joseph McClatchie Dawson (1877-1956)<sup>15</sup>

Joseph Dawson was born in the Wairarapa. His father was a contractor in the district and Dawson's education included a background in construction work. In 1900 he left New Zealand and travelled to South Africa, England and Australia, returning in 1906 to establish his own architectural practice in Wellington.

Dawson was an inaugural member of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, formed in 1905, and became a Fellow of the Institute in 1913. He was its president from 1938-1940. He formed close associations with the entrepreneurs of the burgeoning motor vehicle industry, designing showrooms, assembly plants and office buildings for, among others, Hatrick and Co. and the Colonial Motor Company.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Historic Places Trust, "Dawson, Joseph McClatchie.", *Professional Biographies*, accessed 4 September 2012, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?ID=47>

In 1929 he appointed Jack Ian King (1900-1972) as his first partner. In 1946 Dawson entered semi-retirement, retiring in 1948. The firm he founded continues as King and Dawson.

Dawson designed a number of Wellington buildings, including:

- Columbia Hotel, Cuba Street (1908)
- T.G. Macarthy Building, Willis Street (1913)
- Hatricks Motor Garage (now Manthel Motors), corner Taranaki and Wakefield Streets (1913)
- CMC Building, Courtenay Place (1920)
- Hope Gibbons Building, cnr Taranaki and Dixon Street (1925)
- Edilson's Building, 171-173 Cuba Street (1928)
- James Smith's 1932 refurbishment and new facade

## **2.0 Physical description**

### **2.1 Architecture**

This building is three storied masonry building in restrained neo-Classical style.

The Swan Lane and Cuba Street facades of the building remain basically unchanged and reveal a simple and functional design that contains minimal Classical allusions and a concern for functional requirements such as good daylighting to the upper floors. The second-floor windows are recessed under wide segmental arches and give the building something of a warehouse flavour. The facades on both levels are marked by fluted pilasters at the middle and ends. These pilasters carry a bare capital that consists of little more than stylised guttae. There is no entablature above the pilasters but a projecting cornice and balustraded parapet cap the building. This building has pleasant proportions and contributes to the Cuba Street townscape.<sup>16</sup>

### **2.2 Materials**

The construction is reinforced concrete, with concrete floors over all levels supported on steel joists.<sup>17</sup>

### **2.3 Setting**

The building occupies a prominent site on the corner of Swan Lane and Cuba Street, enhanced by the absence of a building to the north, once the site of the Swan Hotel and now a parking lot. This allows good views of the building's long north façade. The immediate area is predominantly low-rise and older in character, with the exception of two very large, modern buildings on the opposite side of Cuba Street. The building's northern elevation forms part of an enclave of built heritage centred on Swan Lane. Included in this are The Bakehouse, and the mostly intact rear elevations of several heritage buildings, specifically Toomath's Buildings on Ghuznee Street and the Berry and Lazule Buildings on Cuba Street, again highly visible because of the parking lot. The building is close to the mid-point of the Cuba Street Heritage Area in a part of the precinct that retains a high concentration of heritage buildings. The narrowness of the streets means that broader views are not easily obtained.

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<sup>16</sup> Wellington City Council, "161-163 Cuba Street", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 22.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

### 3.0 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 building is an example of a three storied Edwardian masonry building in a sparsely detailed neo-Classical style.

The Cuba Street and Swan Lane facades of the building remain largely unchanged.

**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 occupies a prominent position on the corner of Cuba Street and Swan Lane. The scale, materials and style of this building contribute to the townscape of Cuba Street.

**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 group of Edwardian commercial buildings on Cuba Street which contribute positively to the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

This building also has group value as it is one of several buildings built for TG Macarthy.

*Further research to complete:*

- *How many other buildings did Dawson design for Macarthy?*
- *How many other building did TG Macarthy (and later his estate) build / own?*

##### **Historic Value:**

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

This building was designed by notable Wellington architect JM Dawson for prominent Wellington businessman and benefactor TG Macarthy.

This building also has historic value for its long use as a drapery (about 50 years), in particular as the head store of George and George, a very successful Wellington drapery business.

**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?*

**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 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 Cuba Street and Swan Lane facades of the building remain largely intact with a high level of original detailing, despite modifications to the ground floor shop front.

**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.

## 4.0 Sources

Cyclopedia Co. Ltd, "Mr. Thomas George Macarthy", in *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District* (Wellington: The Cyclopedia Company Limited, 1897), accessed September 5, 2012, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d28-d17.html>

Hawke, G.R. "Macarthy, Thomas George – Biography", in the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated September 1, 2010, <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/2m2/1>

Historic Places Trust, "Dawson, Joseph McClatchie.", *Professional Biographies*, accessed 4 September 2012, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?ID=47>

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

Main, William. *Wellington Through a Victorian Lens* (Wellington: Millwood Press, 1972).

Wellington City Council, "161-163 Cuba Street", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 22.

Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (block 4)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

### Newspapers

*West Coast Times*, Issue 2492, 26 March 1877, Page 3

*Grey River Argus*, Volume 21, Issue 3079, 28 June 1878, Page 2

*Colonist*, Volume XX, Issue 2417, 11 July 1878, Page 3

"Concert", *Colonist*, Volume XXVI, Issue 3529, 2 August 1882, Page 3

*Evening Post*, Volume XXXII, Issue 28, 19 June 1886, Page 2

"Wellington Industrial Exhibition", *Evening Post*, Volume LI, Issue 109, 8 May 1896, Page 2

*Dominion*, Volume 6, Issue 1585, 31 October 1912, Page 3

### Wellington City Council Records

"Heritage building - 161 Cuba Street, Te Aro - Craft Village". 1041-06-CUB161, Wellington City Council Records.

## 5.0 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)		None found
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	N	Can't locate
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

Dominion, Volume 4, Issue 1220, 31 August 1911, Page 4

The tender of Messrs. Trevor Bros. has been accepted for the erection of a block of buildings for Mr. T. G. Macarthy, next the White Swan Hotel in Cuba Street. The buildings are to be erected in reinforced concrete three stories high. Mr. J. M. Dawson is the architect.

Dominion, Volume 6, Issue 1585, 31 October 1912, Page 3

The large modern three-story building in Cuba Street, at the corner of Swan Lane, belonging to the T. G. Macarthy Estate, and which has not been occupied since it was built, has been taken by George and George, drapers. Mr. J. M. Dawson, architect to the estate, has just completed plans for an addition at the back. This will be of two stories, and will make 85 feet of show window space to Swan Lane, and 42 feet to Cuba Street. The whole of the buildings will be occupied by the various retail departments except the top floor, which will be reserved for workrooms. The building, when completed by this latest addition, will have cost over £6000. Mr. Dawson has also had completed for the Macarthy Estate the Terminus Hotel, Picton, which is now held by the Public Trustee as executor. The work cost £7500. Messrs. G. A. Smith and Co., Picton, were builders, and the architect's representative was Mr. W. R. Lepper, Wellington.

Evening Post, Volume XCI, Issue 80, 4 April 1916, Page 3

It is just fourteen years ago since this enterprising firm began business in Newtown, and owing to the expansion of their business they had to move into more commodious premises in Riddiford-street. Messrs. George and George have their head store at 161, 163, and 165 Cuba-street, and branches at Brooklyn, Hataitai, and Petone, as well as at Riddiford-street. The large amount of goods the firm buy for the requirements of their various shops enables them to buy cheaply, and consequently each branch is able to sell goods at lower rates than many a large establishment where high rent is a considerable item, and the public thus get the benefit of Messrs. George's system of wholesale buying. The firm employ two buyers in London, who are constantly searching the markets for novelties and goods suitable for the New Zealand trade. Large importations of calicoes, sheetings, hosiery, underwear, striped flan-

nelette, and Fox serges were made, in anticipation of a shortage of goods, and these fabrics are now being sold at the same price as ruled before the war. It should be clearly understood that the serges mentioned are guaranteed fast dyes, as they were bought before the present crisis became so acute, and aniline dyes were not at a premium.

Bedding is one of the many lines the firm specialise in, and every pound of hair or kapoc is made thoroughly sanitary before it leaves the factory. A large purchase of colonial blankets enables the firm to supply all winter needs without raising the prices. A visit to the showroom in Riddiford-street will convince ladies that the firm of George and George are in the front rank of importers of millinery and ladies' dress goods.



L. A. GEORGE

(Of George and George, Cuba-street).  
For glad rags and sad rags and queer  
rags and dear rags,  
And "trousers" and blouses, friend  
George fills the breach.  
He knows all the capers peculiar to  
drapers.  
He's Cuba-street's coughdrop, in  
fact he's a peach!

NZ Truth, Issue 769, 13 March 1920, Page 5

George and George's :Eventful opening of George & George's new enlarged head store, 161-3 Cuba



Street. You are invited to be present on Tuesday next, 28th August [1923 or 1928 or 1934].

Date: 1920-1935

Ref: Eph-C-RETAIL-1920s-01

Arrangement of text and inset photographs showing two interiors (Dress Department and Mantle Showroom), head and shoulders portraits of A Leonard R George and Clifford D A George; and a group photograph of the 71 members of the staff.

Quantity: 1 b&w photo-mechanical print(s).

Physical Description: Photolithograph, on poster 507 x 360 mm.

DC Rights: Not restricted

Format: 1 b&w photo-mechanical print(s), Photolithograph, on poster 507 x 360 mm., Vertical image, Photolithographs, Advertising, Posters, Ephemera, Group portraits

<http://beta.natlib.govt.nz/records/23218921?search%5Bi%5D%5Bcategory%5D=Images&search%5Bpath%5D=items&search%5Btext%5D=%22george+and+george%22>