

Former People's Palace Hotel (main building)

207-219 Cuba Street



Image: *Charles Collins, 2014*

Summary of heritage significance

- The former People's Palace Hotel at 207-219 Cuba Street is a fine representative example of an Edwardian Hotel. The fourth floor (and parapet) is a modern (2004) intervention and features stylised Classical ornamentation that is relatively sympathetic to the original design.
- This building has significant townscape value for the visual interest that it adds to the Cuba Streetscape and as a part of the Cuba Street Heritage Area. It has one of the longest facades on Cuba Street, and the scale, materials and style of this building contribute to the townscape of Cuba Street.
- The building was one of many People's Palace hotels that were built by the Salvation Army in Australian and New Zealand cities in the late 19th and early 20th century. Although these buildings were generally built as grand Victorian or Edwardian hotels, their grandeur belied their use as refuges or shelters for the urban poor, and as cheap accommodation for travelling working class people. Of the three People's Palace hotels built in New Zealand, only this Cuba Street building and its northern annexe remain.

District Plan:	Map 16, reference 89/4 <i>(front façade, entrance lobby and tiled floors)</i>
Legal Description:	Lot 1 DP 366988, Pt Sec 128 Town of Wellington
Heritage Area:	Cuba Street Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	Category II, reference 3626
Archaeological Site:	NZAA Central City Archaeological Area R27/270
Other Names:	People's Palace, Railton Hotel, Trekkers Hotel, CQ Hotel
Key physical dates:	Built: 1907
Architect / Builder:	Architect: Lieutenant-Colonel Saunders, William Gray Young
Former uses:	Commercial – Hotel
Current uses:	Commercial – Hotel
Earthquake Prone Status:	No earthquake information present

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History¹

This hotel at 207 – 219 Cuba Street has a long-standing association with the Salvation Army and was, for many years, used as a temperance hotel.

The land was owned by Major James Paul, an officer in the British Army.² His daughter Annette joined the Salvation Army in 1889 and had a successful career, reaching the rank of Staff Captain. When the Army's accommodation for needy women became overcrowded, she donated the then very large sum of over £3,500 to assist with new accommodation.³ As a result the "Paulina Rescue Home" was built on this site in 1894. The Paulina Rescue Home moved to Owen Street in 1907 and the old hostel was replaced by a new hotel known as the 'People's Palace' – the Army's traditional name for its cheap, liquor-free hotels.

People's Palace hotels were a well established institution in many large Australian cities, that were used as refuges and shelters for the urban poor, and as affordable accommodation for travelling working class people. This was part of the Salvation Army's social, humanitarian and religious programme to assist the "fallen and suffering brothers and sisters" and to "rescue" "outcasts".⁴ The Salvation Army opened three People's Palace hotels in New Zealand in the early 20th century– with one in Auckland (1903), Wellington (1908) and Christchurch (1912).⁵ All three buildings were substantial Edwardian Classical buildings and, of the three, only the Wellington building survives.

The People's Palace Hotel in Wellington was designed in 1907 by Australian architect Lieutenant-Colonel Saunders. It was originally three-storeys in height and had 98 bedrooms on the two upper floors, and a large kitchen serving one dining room on the ground floor. A new wing was designed for the building in 1916 by architect W. Gray Young. In 1928 the Salvation Army purchased the neighbouring 203-205 Cuba Street and this was later incorporated into the larger hotel. The People's Palace was renamed the Railton Hotel at sometime after the mid-1940s⁶, but remained in use by the Salvation Army until 1986 when it was sold to the Presbyterian Church Property Trust. It was sold again, two months later, to Trekkers Hotel Ltd. The building's interior was remodelled by Burwell Hunt Architects in 1986-87.

In 2003 an additional floor and parapet were added to the hotel and the building underwent seismic strengthening as part of the larger two-hotel 'CQ' development. This development included the refurbishment of the two People's Palace hotels, and the demolition/façade retention of two smaller heritage buildings to the south – the timber Classical commercial building 221-225 Cuba (WCC ref 16/89.5), and the façade of a pleasant c.1920 two-storey stripped Classical commercial building (WCC

¹ History adapted from Wellington City Council, "207-219 Cuba Street", *Wellington Built Heritage Inventory: Non Residential Precincts 2001*, (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA32

² Ward p.218

³ www.hotelwellington.co.nz/About_Us/Heritage.html

⁴ PEOPLE'S PALACE HOTEL. *Dominion*, Volume 1, Issue 249, 14 July 1908, Page 8

⁵ Paul Christoffel. 'Hotels and motels - Types of early hotels', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 13-Jul-12 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/hotels-and-motels/page-3>

⁶ Note: the building was known as the People's Palace in this 1954 newspaper advert. *Evening Post*, Volume CXL, Issue 85, 8 October 1945, Page 1

Cuba St Heritage Area – contributor). Two new towers and a small scale retail development at the south of the site complete the development.⁷

The former “Peoples Palace” is a well known feature of Cuba Street, and is part of the unique group of buildings which create the significant historic streetscape in the Cuba precinct. This building is sited in the Cuba Street Heritage Area and makes a positive contribution to this significant collection of heritage buildings. The scale, materials and style of this building all contribute to the townscape values of Cuba Street.

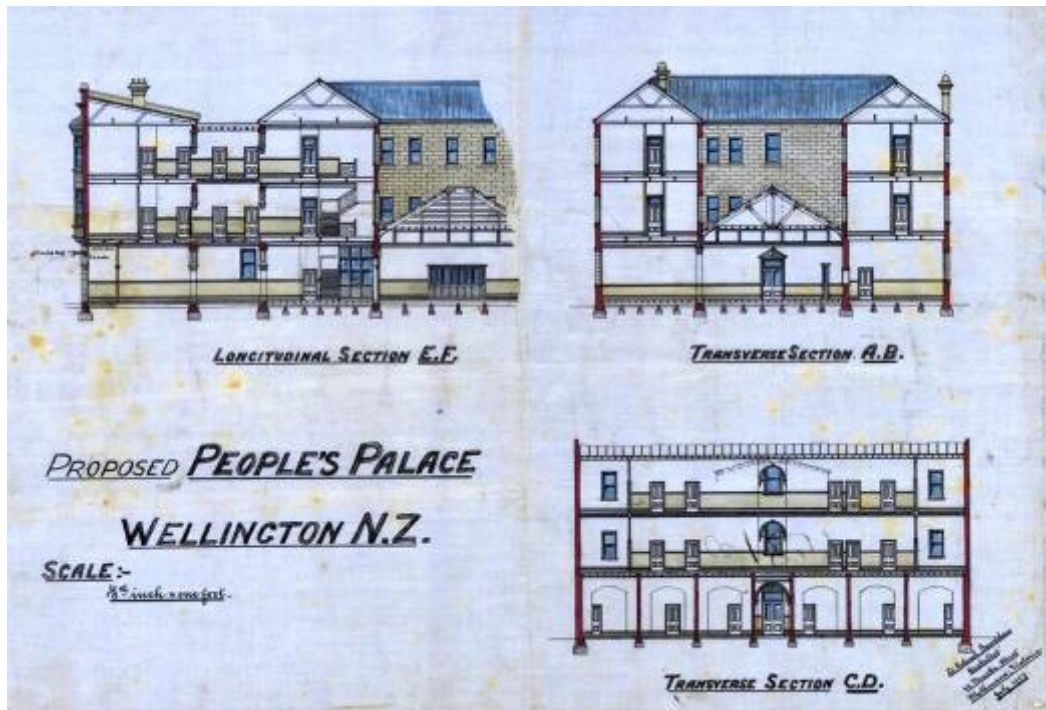


c.1908 People’s Palace Hotel on Cuba Street – note that the building was originally three-storeys high.⁸

⁷ Michael Kelly, and Russell Murray, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Report*, (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006), 21.

⁸ Paul Christoffel. 'Hotels and motels - Types of early hotels', *Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand*, updated 10-Jul-13
URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/photograph/21266/peoples-palace>

1.2 Timeline of modifications



OC 7857- construction

10544 - additions at the rear (facing Dunlop Terrace) 1917

1952 213 Cuba Street, convert annex to flat (00056:444:B33787)

1986 213 Cuba Street, refurbish hotel (00059:52:D5044)

SR67781 - seismic strengthening and fit out of new restaurant 2000

SR76161 - seismic strengthening stage one 2001

SR86099 – seismic upgrade to levels 1 and 2, additions to level 3, new interior levels 1 and 2, upgrade of office/reception and stairs 2002-2003

1.3 Occupation history⁹

People's Palace Hotel (Stones 1910-11, 1915-16, 1920, 1925, 1930, 1935, 1940, 1945, Wises 1950-51, 1955, 1961-62, 1967-68, 1971-2, 1975)

Railton Hotel (Wises 1980, 1985)

Trekkers Hotel (Wises 1990).

Various retail tenants include draper, butchers, chemist, tea rooms, frock shop, clothing retailers, photographers & travel centre

1.4 Architect

The former Railton Hotel was designed by Australian architect Lieutenant Colonel Saunders of the Salvation Army.

⁹ Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Spreadsheet (Blocks 1-3)*, (Wellington City Council: Unpublished Report prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture¹⁰

The People's Palace Hotel at 207-219 Cuba Street is a good representative example of an Edwardian Classical hotel. Its grand façade belies the fact that it was built as a shelter or refuge for the urban poor, and as affordable accommodation for the travelling working class.

The building was originally designed as a three-storey hotel that was constructed in load bearing brick masonry with Jarrah floor and roof joists. The exterior consists of six bays, symmetrically arranged around a central segment that signals the main entrance to the building. "People's Palace" is moulded onto the entablature above the first and second windows. In each of the bays there is a pair of windows, recessed into plain heads on the first floor and segmental arches on the second floor. The bays are separated by vestigial pilasters, and there is a frieze between the two upper floors inset with vermiculated moulding.

The fourth-floor and elaborate cornice/parapet were built in c.2004. The proportions of the new windows and the stylised design of the window heads, the frieze, cornice, and pediment are all modern features that are relatively sympathetic to the existing building.

2.2 Materials

- Load bearing brick masonry
- Jarrah floor and roof joists

2.3 Setting

The former People's Palace at 207-219 Cuba Street is part of a large two-hotel 'CQ' development that also incorporates the former People's Palace Hotel – northern annexe (WCC 16/89.3), the timber façade of 221-225 Cuba (WCC 16/89.5), and the façade of a pleasant c.1920 two-storey stripped Classical commercial building (WCC Cuba St Heritage Area – contributor). The two retained facades form part of the street-edge of the southernmost hotel in this development. The bulk of the hotel is set back from the street in the form of two, tall, towers that are somewhat taller than their neighbours. The jumbled grey modern shop-fronts to the south complete the hotel development and are, along with the functional Ellmers building (with its distinctive concrete 'shod' verandah posts), non-contributors to the Heritage Area.

The 'CQ' hotel development is set in the Cuba Street Heritage Area on a section of Cuba Street between Vivian and Abel Smith streets. This stretch of Cuba Street has a startling entrance at the southern end of great architectural and cultural contrast. It sets the extremely dignified former National Bank building (now up-market restaurant Logan Brown) opposite the simple, if dignified, Morgan's building. The remainder of the block has undergone considerable change in the last 20 years which has impacted on the overall integrity of the heritage streetscape. The scale of the block is predominantly two and three storeys, with the notable exception of the current and future hotel complex and Booth House. The street edge line is fragmented in this block with many gaps and breaks and the heritage character of the

¹⁰ Wellington City Council, "207-219 Cuba Street", *Wellington Built Heritage Inventory: Non Residential Precincts 2001*, (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA32

street is undermined with many poorly-considered modern buildings. There are, however, some individual buildings that have high heritage value and remain a strong presence in the streetscape.¹¹

The building makes a positive contribution to the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

¹¹ Adapted from Kelly, 2006

3.0 Sources

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

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

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

Wellington City Archive

00056:444:B33787

00059:52:D5044

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 former People's Palace Hotel at 207-219 Cuba Street is a fine representative example of an Edwardian Hotel. The fourth floor (and parapet) is a modern (2004) intervention and features stylised Classical ornamentation that is relatively sympathetic to the original design.

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 has significant townscape value for the visual interest that it adds to the Cuba Streetscape and as a part of the Cuba Street Heritage Area. It has one of the longest facades on Cuba Street, and 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 was converted in 1928 to form an addition to the adjoining original People's Palace (1908) by the Salvation Army who owned both buildings. It is a part of a group of buildings that were owned by the organisation in Cuba Street.

Historic Value:

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

This building is primarily associated with the Salvation Army for whom the building was constructed and who owned it for over 70 years.

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

The building was one of many People's Palace hotels that were built by the Salvation Army in Australian and New Zealand cities in the late 19th and early 20th century. Although these buildings were generally built as grand Victorian or Edwardian hotels, their grandeur belied their use as refuges or shelters for the urban poor, and as cheap accommodation for travelling working class people. Of the three People's Palace hotels built in New Zealand, only this Cuba Street building and its northern annexe remain.

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 R2/270, is in an area known to have had pre 1900 human activity, and known to have sites of

significance to Maori. The likelihood of archaeological materials being present is likely.

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?*

The building retains some symbolic value for its link with the humanitarian, social and religious work of the Salvation Army.

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?*

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 exterior of this building retains significant amounts of original material and has had few modifications that impact upon it negatively. Despite the additional storey, this building has authenticity and integrity, of materials, design, workmanship, and setting.

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. It is a representative building that retains economic and functional uses as well as retaining a significant amount of original material and authenticity.

4.0 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*