

Commercial Building

276-278 Cuba Street



Images: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- 276-278 Cuba Street is a two storey brick and plaster, nicely balanced, Edwardian Classical composition.
- This building is of townscape value due to its scale (two storeys), materials (rendered brickwork), design style (stripped classical), and siting (the façade forms part of the street-edge), which all contribute to the character of the mixed group of small scale mixed use commercial and residential that form Block 7 of the Cuba Street Conservation Area.
- This commercial building is one of the many buildings constructed in upper Cuba Street following the commission of the electric tramway in 1904. These were intended to take advantage of the increased traffic that the tramways would create.

1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

This commercial building is one of the many buildings constructed in upper Cuba Street following the commission of the electric tramway in 1904. These were intended to take advantage of the increased traffic that the tramways would create.

This building was designed and built by the contractors, Johnson and Nicholson, for Robert Paterson. The plans were prepared in November 1906.¹ The original plans show two shop fronts with residential accommodation at the rear and on the floor above, a common usage pattern in Cuba Street.² The building has housed a number of different businesses including an upholsterer, a fruiterer, a ladies and gents' outfitter, the Regent Book Club, and Fashion Wise Children's wear.

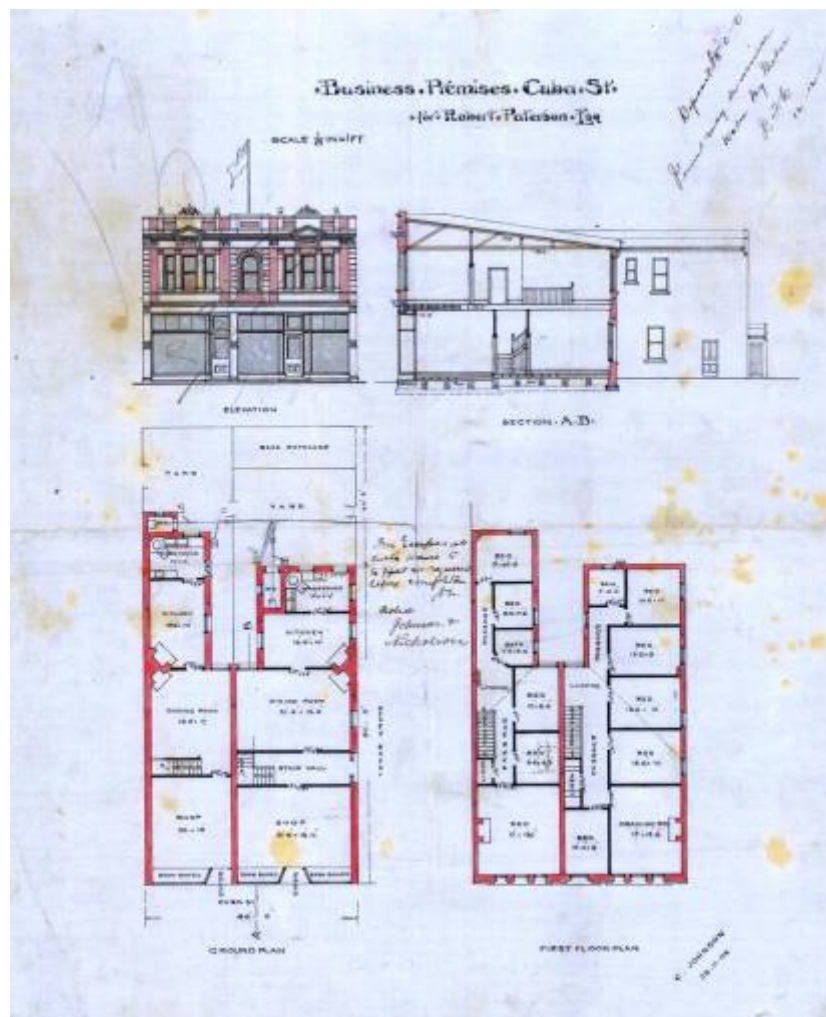
The construction of this building is in load bearing brick masonry laid in English bond, on reinforced concrete foundations and piles. The interior structural membranes are timber. The façade on Cuba Street is Edwardian Classical in style, but appears over crowded – on the upper floor, the rusticated piers and Doric pilasters (12 in all) seem to hem in the two sets of square headed windows and the central round headed window. The entablature above is similarly overly detailed, with consoles, projecting triangle pediments, heavy cornice, and an elaborate parapet. The shop fronts, in comparison, appear clean and spacious with the decorative tiles below the window sills being a distinctive feature.

In 2006-2007 the building underwent seismic strengthening – the parapets were restrained at roof level, and the chimneys were restrained at each floor level and at roof level.

¹ Wellington City Council, "276-278 Cuba Street," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*, (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 36.

² Ibid

1.2 Timeline of modifications



- 1906-07 Building constructed (00053:132:7429)
- 2006-07 Seismic Strengthening - With regards to the parapets, these are restrained at roof level as shown in plan on drawing S1.03 and in section on drawing S2.02. We note that the chimneys are integral with the brick walls and parapets and are therefore restrained at each floor level and at roof level. The design was by Connell Mott MacDonald, one of Aurecon's heritage firms and was subject to building consent number 136698.
- 2007 Interior alterations – installation of sink bench, coffee machine, and dishwasher into service area (00078: 4682: 172752)

7429 – construction

Application for renovation and proposed change of use 2004 SR122260, created but not issued yet. Work has begun on project at creation of this database³

³ Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet*, 2006

1.3 Occupation history

Alfred Ivan, upholsterer (Stones 1915-16)

Frederick Wager, fruiterer & later Mrs Elizabeth Wager, fruiterer (278) (Stones 1920, 1925, 1930)

John Moron, ladies & gents' outfitter (276) (Stones 1935, 1940, 1945, 1950-51, 1955, 1961-62, 1967-68)

Regent Book Club (278) (Stones 1945, 1950-51, 1955)

Fashion Wise, children's wear (Wises 1967-78, 1971-72)

Not listed after this.⁴

1.4 Architect

C Johnson

Also 54-56 Cuba St/Lot 1 DP 828

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

On the west side, hard on the edge of the motorway is the two storey brick and plaster Moran building, a nicely balanced Edwardian Classical composition of 1906 featuring a richly decorated top storey complete with rusticated pilasters at the corners and surrounding the central bay and a bold cornice surmounted by an elaborately detailed pediment. A pitched verandah roof provides shelter to the shop fronts, which retain their original configuration, joinery and tiles. Next to this is a simple former shop, two stories high and now converted to residential use. Extensively "modernised" over the years, its street elevation retains little visible trace of its 1885 origins. There is a narrow alleyway to the next building at 282 Cuba Street. This has a boxy 1930s vintage single-storey shop at the front and a very rare 1869 cottage at the back, complete with clapboard sheathing and ornately fretted barge boards to the very sharply pitched roof. This is the oldest surviving building on the street.⁵

The facade on Cuba Street, Edwardian Classical in style, appears over-crowded. On the upper floor, the rusticated piers and Doric pilasters, twelve in all, seem to hem-in the two sets of square-headed windows, and the central round-headed window. The entablature above seems similarly over-detailed, with consoles, projecting triangular pediments, heavy cornice, and an elaborate parapet. The shop fronts below appear clean and spacious in comparison, with chequered tiles below the window sills a distinctive feature. This is a typical upper Cuba Street building, in which the original social pattern of shop front and residential accommodation above is preserved.⁶

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Report* (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006), 22.

⁶ Wellington City Council, "276-278 Cuba Street," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*, (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 36.

2.2 Materials

The construction is load-bearing brick masonry (English bond) on reinforced concrete foundations and piles. Interior structural members are timber.⁷

2.3 Setting

This building is set in the Cuba Street Heritage Area in a block that is made up of mostly two storied buildings. It is sited on the corner of Cuba Street and Karo Drive

⁷ Wellington City Council, "276-278 Cuba Street," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*, (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 36.

3.0 Sources

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

Wellington City Council. "276-278 Cuba Street," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 36.

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

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

276-278 Cuba Street is a two storey brick and plaster, nicely balanced, Edwardian Classical composition.

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 is of townscape value due to its scale (two storeys), materials (rendered brickwork), design style (stripped classical), and siting (the façade forms part of the street-edge), which all contribute to the character of the mixed group of small scale mixed use commercial and residential that form Block 7 of the Cuba Street Conservation 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?*

Historic Value:

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

This commercial building is one of the many buildings constructed in upper Cuba Street following the commission of the electric tramway in 1904. These were intended to take advantage of the increased traffic that the tramways would create.

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

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?

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 representative of an Edwardian Classical building, a type that was common in Wellington at the time of this buildings construction, the shop front forms part of a streetscape of Edwardian buildings within the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

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?*

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 significance as part of a fine group of Edwardian shops, commercial and residential premises that comprise Block 7 of the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

4.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory		
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
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		
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)		