

House

280 Cuba Street



Image: *Charles Collins, 2014*

Summary of heritage significance

- The building is comprised of an 1885/1886 cottage with a 1924 shop front. The later c.2000 alterations to the shopfront (including the modern verandah & terrace, and infill of the shop windows) detract from the aesthetic value of the simple, well proportioned Stripped Classical Cuba Street façade.
- The building has local/regional significance for connection to the Prouse family, who were early settlers and active in the timber milling industry in Wellington, Hutt Valley, Levin & Horowhenua.
- The building contributes to the Cuba Street Heritage Area streetscape

District Plan:	Map 16, reference 92 /4
Legal Description:	280 Cuba Street / Pt. Sec 99 T.O.W
Heritage Area:	Cuba Street Heritage Area – block 7
HPT Listed:	Cuba Street Historic Area
Archaeological Site:	Pre 1900 building & Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	Crossroads Gallery, Leatherworks
Key physical dates:	1885/ 1886 built, 1924 shop front added
Architect / Builder:	unknown
Former uses:	Residential / commercial
Current uses:	Residential / commercial
Earthquake Prone Status:	Orange S128 issued SR 148411 Expires 15 June 2012.

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

This building was constructed in 1885 – 86 as a house for Richard Prouse. Prouse appears to have occupied the house until 1892, when it was let to a series of tenants. Richard Prouse (1829 – 94) was an early Wellington settler who arrived in Wellington aged 10 years on the Duke of Roxburgh in 1840. He settled and established a sawmill business in Wainuiomata, and later in Whiteman's Valley, Silverstream. When he retired in the mid to late 1880s he moved to Wellington where he lived until his death in 1894. Richard Prouse lends his name to the 'Richard Prouse Park' sports fields in Wainuiomata.

Prouse descendents include two sons who established Prouse Brothers sawmills in Levin and a large joinery factory/timber yard in Wellington, and John Prouse a 'well known baritone'.¹ The architect William John Prouse (1878-1956) was also a member of the extended family. Prouse Bros timber joinery catalogues survive and show that the business operated on a similar scale to Odlin's, another well known local timber merchant.

The property was owned by Prouse from 1885-1894 and was passed to his daughter FL Prouse after his death.² From street directories it would appear that she did not live in the house. Fanny Prouse 'in turn sold the property to Amen Romanos in 1923 who added the shop front in 1924. Romanos was Lebanese, and, in the backyard there was once a Lebanese Cedar tree which was bought as a seedling from his home and planted to remind him of the 'old land'.³

The most numerous Middle Eastern early settlers to New Zealand came from Lebanon in the 1890s. Many Lebanese men worked as peddlers selling 'fancy goods from door to door' (particularly in Dunedin and Otago) and many families used the earnings from 'hawking' to establish businesses, particularly clothes stores. In the 1890s there was an attempt to stop migration from Lebanon to New Zealand and to prevent Lebanese people from peddling goods. By 1900 an English language test was required for immigrants – this made it harder for Lebanese people to immigrate.⁴

Wairarapa Daily Times wrote that an Amin [or Amen] Romanos was married in 1915 in Syria, divorced in 1919 in Masterton and worked as a 'Syrian Hawker'.⁵ The Romanos family appear to have occupied the house from 1930 to 1975, and the shop was let to various commercial tenants from 1935.

The building was modified in c.2000, the shop front was altered and the balcony/verandah added.

¹ Kete Horowhenua. <http://horowhenua.kete.net.nz/site/topics/show/1905-richard-prouse-1829-1894>

² NZ Historic Places Trust Buildings Field Record Form

³ NZ Historic Places Trust Buildings Field Record Form

⁴ James Veitch and Dalia Tinawi. 'Middle Eastern peoples - The Lebanese', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 4-Mar-09 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/middle-eastern-peoples/1>

⁵ Wairarapa Daily Times, Volume 45, Issue 13792, 24 March 1919, Page 5



280 Cuba Street image from 1995 Heritage Inventory showing 1924 shop front. Photo Negative K21 A. 16/3/92

1.2 Timeline of modifications

1884/1885 constructed

1924 Shop front added

2000 (assumed) shop front altered, verandah/balcony added

1.3 Occupation history

Richard Prouse (Stones1891-92),

Robert Patterson, commercial agent (Stones1895-96),

Charles Smith, labourer (Stones1900),

John Waterhouse, labourer (Stones1905),

George Knapp, messenger (Stones1910-11),

Mrs Ellen Wilson, Robert Kyle, fireman (Stones1915-16),

Ernest Whiterod, storeman (Stones1920),

Mrs L.S Robson, dressmaker (Stones1925),

Amen Romanos, traveller (280a) (Stones1930, 1935, 1940, 1945, Wises1950-51, 1955),

Peter Romanos (Stones1961-62, 1967-68, 1971-72, 1975), not listed 1980, Leatherworks (Wises1985, 1990).

280 (shop separate from dwelling c.1935):

Clifford Vercoe, hairdresser (Stones1935),

Charles Collins, hairdresser (Stones1940, 1945, Wises1950-51, 1955),

Crossroads Gallery (Wises1971-72).

Listed with 282 after this.

1.4 Architect

Unknown

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The building is a late Victorian house with a later (1924) shop-front addition. The Cuba Street façade is a simplified version of Stripped Classical style and features an arched parapet and simple cornice. There are timber casement windows with a lead light detail to top lights at the façade. The building has a later (circa 2000) verandah and balcony addition, and the shop front has been in-filled and timber door and windows added. The c.2000 additions are poorly articulated and detract from the aesthetic value of the building, and the wider Cuba Street streetscape.

2.2 Materials

Rendered brick shop-front with timber framed cottage behind. The specification for the shop-front includes concrete piles, reinforced beams, timber floor & partitions, English Bond brickwork.⁶ The original specification includes an 'iron veranda' which (if it was constructed) has since been removed. Information from WCC archives indicates that the 1924 shop front addition included tiles to be installed to the 'front and sides under shop front.' And that new windows were added to the house.

2.3 Setting

Block 7 Cuba Street Conservation Area.

The block is comprised of mostly two storied buildings with the exception of a three storied property on the Webb Street corner. The new motorway extension cuts through Cuba Street at Karo Drive. Adjoining buildings are the 1906 classical Edwardian *Moran* building to the north, and an 1869 cottage with a later 1930s shop front to the south. Block 7 comprises a mix of buildings in residential and commercial use that include: -

- 282 Cuba Street - the oldest surviving building on Cuba Street
- Masonry buildings with elaborate decorative elements
- Thistle Hall (1907)
- 1935 'Moderne' Lampard Flats
- Two storied timber buildings with original or early shop fronts

⁶ NZ Historic Places Trust Buildings Field Record Form

3.0 Sources

NZ Historic Places Trust Buildings Field Record Form

James Veitch and Dalia Tinawi. 'Middle Eastern peoples - The Lebanese', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 4-Mar-09 URL:

<http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/middle-eastern-peoples/1>

Kete Horowhenua website accessed October 2012 .

<http://horowhenua.kete.net.nz/site/topics/show/1905-richard-prouse-1829-1894>

Wairarapa Daily Times, 24 March 1919

WCC archives

4.0 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?

The building comprises of an 1885/1886 cottage with a 1924 shop front. The later c.2000 alterations to the shopfront (including the modern verandah & terrace, and infill of the shop windows) detract from the aesthetic value of the simple, well proportioned Stripped Classical Cuba Street façade.

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 façade is a simple version of classical architecture. The scale (two storeys), materials (rendered brickwork), design style (stripped classical), and siting (the façade forms part of the street-edge) 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. Recent addition of the veranda, central door and flanking windows to ground floor and the removal of the 1920s shop window detract from the streetscape of shop fronts at Block 7.

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?

The building has some local/regional significance for connections to Prouse family who were early settlers and active in the timber milling industry in Wellington, Hutt Valley, Levin/Horowhenua.

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

The building has some local significance for its connections to Lebanese community, although this has somewhat diminished by the removal of the Cedar of Lebanon tree that once graced the rear courtyard garden.

Scientific Value:

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

Pre 1900 building and Central City NZAA 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?

It is possible that the building has some technological value particularly for any internal the decorative timberwork. This is because the cottage is associated with Prouse Brothers timber merchants who supplied timber mouldings and trim throughout the Wellington Region.

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 simple rendered brick shop front forms part of a streetscape of Edwardian buildings within the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

Sentiment/Connection: *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

The symbolic planting of the Cedar of Lebanon may have once been significant to the local Lebanese community, however, it is likely that this tree has since been removed.

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?*

Local/Regional/National/International

Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?

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.

Local/Regional significance for connections to early settler family / timber milling industry in Wellington, Hutt Valley, Levin/Horowhenua.

Local significance for connections to Lebanese community

5.0Appendix

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)		