

Thistle Hall

293-295 Cuba Street



Thistle Hall (circa 2006 / 2007).

Image: WCC for DPC 48

Image: Charles Collins, 2014

Statement of heritage significance

- The building is a good representative example of Edwardian commercial architecture and was designed by a prominent Wellington architectural practice.
- The building is a landmark from the Arthur Street / Karo Drive inner city bypass, a major traffic route through Wellington on the approach to the motorway (SH1)
- The building has historical association with several prominent local cultural groups, and with significant periods of Wellington social history. It is a significant community facility and has high amenity value to the local community.
- The building has had few intrusive modern alterations and retains significant early or original building fabric (with the exception of removal of the original verandah; replacement of the original parapet and the external cornice and parapet decoration; internal alterations to form the office kitchen and bathrooms).

District Plan:	Map 16 Symbol 94/1
Legal Description:	Pt. Sec 101 T.O.W
Heritage Area:	Cuba Street Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	Cuba Street Historic Area 2012 – not listed as an individual property
Archaeological Site:	Inner Wellington City
Other Names:	Campbell's Oriental Tea Mart Campbell's (Grocer) The Empire (dance hall) The Protestant Hall Company 'The Lodge Room' for the Ancient Order of Foresters Star Stores BOC Signwriters
Key physical dates:	1907
Architect / Builder:	Architect: Penty and Blake
Former uses:	Retail units and first floor warehouse, Dance Hall, Club meeting rooms, Live music venue, Community facility.
Current uses:	Community facility, Community art gallery, Meeting room Meeting hall, Performance venue
Earthquake Prone Status	SR 179933 124 notice served

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History¹

Thistle Hall was designed as a pair of shops and a warehouse for William Campbell, owner of the Oriental Tea Mart. Campbell, who was a grocer and tea merchant, commissioned architects Penty and Blake to design the new premises in 1907. The new building was designed to have two retail units to the ground floor, both with separate entrances to Cuba Street. The service areas included a paved 'dock' for Campbell's cart, a kerosene store, two bathrooms, and a small yard. The first floor was designed for use as a large open-plan warehouse, and trapdoors gave access down to the cart dock below. The estimated cost was £1898.²

Campbell sold the building to the Protestant Hall Company in 1924 but continued to rent the ground floor retail units. The Protestant Hall Company converted the first floor warehouse into a social hall. They installed a new stair to replace the original trap doors, they also built a stage, WC facilities, and a kitchen and service hatch. The hall operated as the 'Empire' (dance hall) but was also known as the 'Lodge Room' as a meeting place for the Wellington members of the Ancient Order of Foresters (a Friendly Society). Campbell moved out of the building in 1928.

The building has been threatened with demolition since 1929 when there was a proposal to widen Arthur Street (to the north). The Protestant Hall Company then offered to sell the building to the WCC, but the offer was declined. The hall company owned the building in 1942 when it was damaged by the Wairarapa earthquake and it is possible that the original verandah was lost at this time. The ornate parapet was replaced at this time with a simplified reinforced concrete beam.³ Ownership of the building transferred to the Equitable Building and Investment Company in 1943, and they immediately sold it to the WCC for £3,582. The WCC called for tenders to repair the earthquake damage in 1945 and the original decorative parapet was replaced by a simple concrete band.

The WCC leased the hall to the Wellington Association of Scottish Societies (WASS) in 1951 and the building was renamed "Thistle Hall". Groups associated with WASS include the Caledonian Society, Gaelic Club, Burns Club, Clan Cameron and the Wellington Scottish Country Dance Club. The hall slowly fell into a state of disrepair due in part to uncertainty about its future. There were concerns that the building was earthquake prone and required strengthening, and that it lay in the route of the proposed motorway/extension. By 1976 WASS raised concerns about the decline in the neighbourhood at Cuba Street "Over the recent times our bookings of the Hall [are] dropping as some people are frightened to go into the area."

Thistle Hall was sublet by WASS and from 1979 – 1981 became known as a punk music venue. It was popular as an unlicensed venue where school-aged children could perform and attend gigs (particularly punk bands). In the later years of the 1990s the legal drinking age was reduced to 18 and other licensed live music venues could then cater to late teen audiences and its significance as one of the few venues available for the under 20's then diminished.

¹ History is based on - Georgina White, 'Thistle Hall 1907 – 2007:100 years of community', commissioned by the Thistle Hall Board of Trustees in 2007.

http://www.thistlehall.org.nz/pdfs/thistle_hall_history-web.pdf

² Building Application form 1907

³ WCC Archives 00056:305:B24117

By 1987 Thistle Hall became the venue for the community protest meetings against the demolition of properties in upper Cuba Street. Key activists included 'Save our City', a group that campaigned against demolition of houses and small businesses in upper Cuba Street, Tonks Avenue, Arthur Street, Footscray Avenue and Kelvin Grove. In 1988 Mayor Jim Belich noted of Cuba Street that "At present the majority of the existing residents subsist in an informal economy fuelled by benefits, dubious activities and casual work. Incomes and costs are low; most rents are 'peppercorn' or non-existent. Intimidation, gang brawls, knifings and beatings are apparently not uncommon." When six houses on Arthur Street were demolished and Landcorp sold 297 – 301 Upper Cuba Street (adjacent to Thistle Hall) to developers, it seemed likely that Thistle Hall would soon follow, but in 1989 the WCC decided that although Arthur Street would be widened, Thistle Hall would remain.

In 1989 the WASS lease was cancelled and Morehu Social Services, a group connected to the Ratana Church, leased the hall. In the mid 1990s an informal group of volunteer caretakers came together to manage bookings, cleaning, power and phone bills. On average 120 people used the hall each week and the bookings ... "included Morehu Social Services' cultural practices, jazzercise, women's self defence, tai chi, tae kwon do, Narcotics Anonymous meetings, work training seminars, after school programmes for children living at Arlington Street flats, and school holiday programmes." The hall also continued in use as a live music venue, albeit one with a noise curfew. In 1998 a group of local residents and business owners formed a charitable trust to manage and run the Thistle Hall and when the BOC sign-writers who had leased the ground floor retail units moved out of the building in 2002 the trust obtained a Lottery Community Facilities grant of \$11,000 to convert the retail units to community use as an art gallery and offices.

Various recent alterations to the building include earthquake strengthening in 1994 and an updated fire and evacuation strategy in 1996. Facilities now include a small meeting room, office, four bathrooms, a kitchenette, store rooms on the ground floor and a hall 'licensed' for 120 people day or night, and kitchen on the first floor. In 2007 the Thistle Hall board of trustees planned to replace the hall floor, install an elevator, build a moveable stage and install a lighting rig.



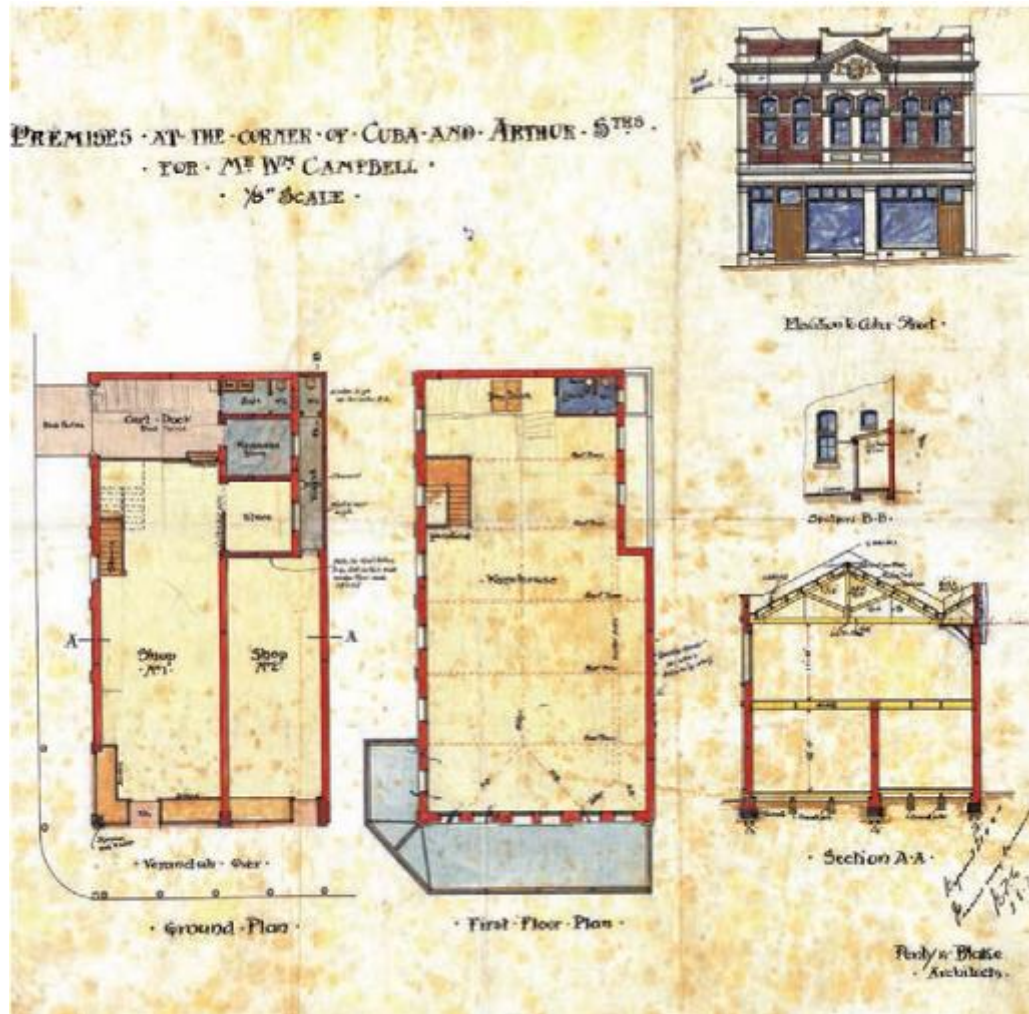
The Thistle Hall from Arthur Street (circa 1940s) Image: Wellington City Council Archives, file reference 00138:0:341



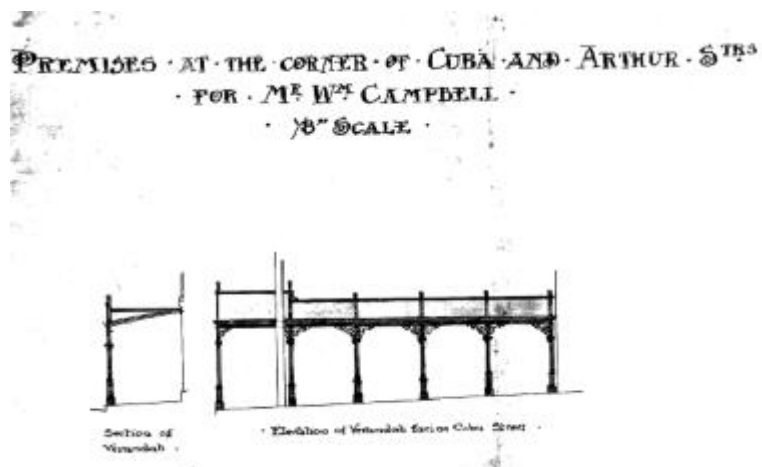
Thistle Hall from the intersection of Arthur and Cuba Streets (1986). Image: Graeme Simpson (Alexander Turnbull Library ID: PA12-1767-03)



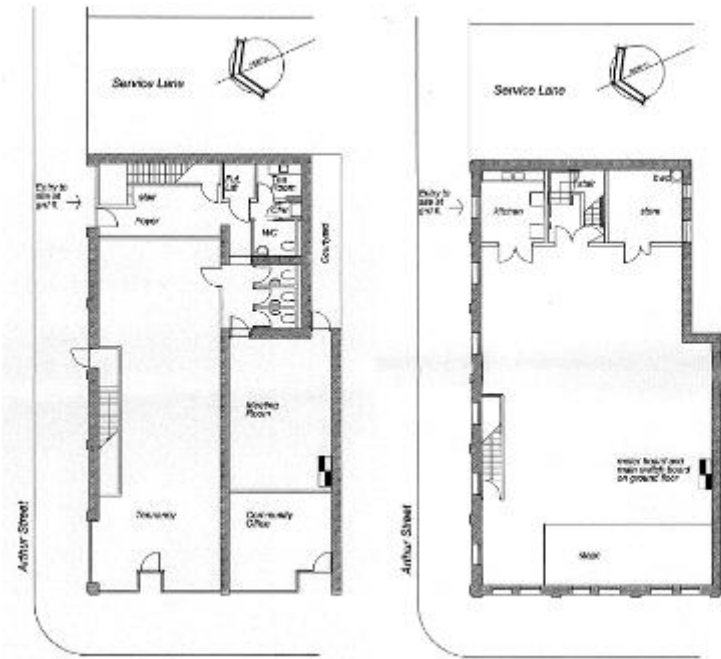
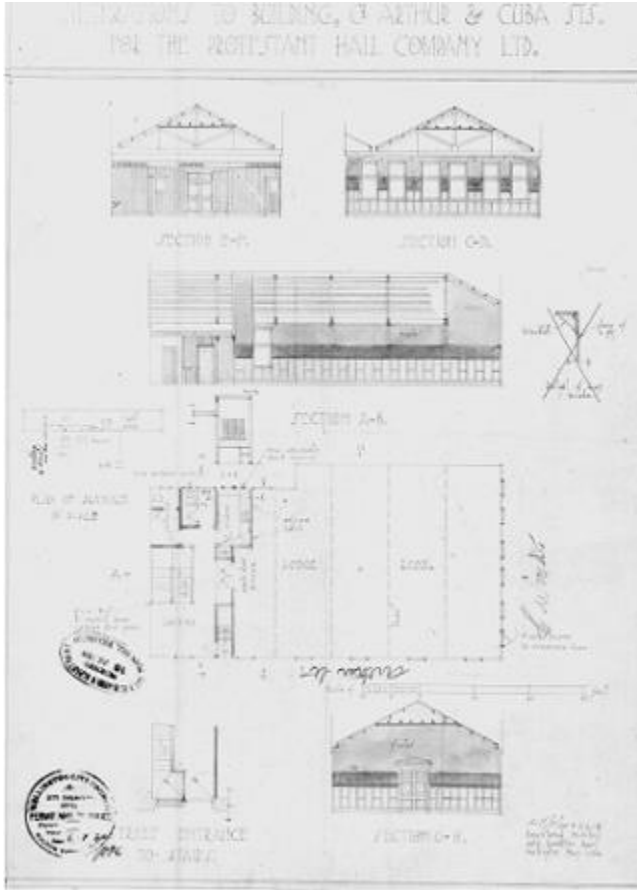
Thistle Hall (January 2002). Image: Phillip Barton (Alexander Turnbull Library ID: PA12-1825-01)



Plans, section and elevation of the Thistle Hall (1907). Image WCC Archives reference 7718.



Elevation of verandah at 293- 295 Cuba Street. Image: WCC Archives reference 7718



1.2 Timeline of modifications

1907	Construction (7718)
1924	conversion to dance hall (A3226)
Unknown (pre – 1945)	verandah removed
1945	reinstate damage from 1942 earthquake (remove parapet)(00056:305:B24117)
1994	some structural strengthening
Unknown (pre-1995)	Jarrah block floor replaced with brick
2012	WCC repairs to encaustic tiles at shop entrances

1.3 Occupation history

William Campbell, grocer (Stones1910-11,1915-16, 1920,1925), Campbell's Grocers (Stones1930), A.H. Dilloway Cash Store (Stones1935), Star Stores Ltd (Stones1940, 1945,Wises1950-51), NZ Mirror Company (Wises1955,1961-62,1967-68,1971-72), BOC Signs and BOC Studios Ltd (Wises1975,1980,1985, 1990)

1995 Conservation plan prepared by Christopher Kilby - Arch 281 (all information from Wises Post Office Directory 1907 – 1954)

1925 – 1930 Richard Coxon – boot maker
 1928 – 1934 Jason Donald - grocer
 1934 – 1936 A H Dilloway – grocer
 1934 – 1946 J Searle and J Sawyer – tailors
 1936 – 1954 Star Stores NZ Ltd – grocers
 1946 – 1954 Morgan and Martin Plumbers

From Georgina White, 'Thistle Hall 1907 – 2007:100 years of community', commissioned by the Thistle Hall Board of Trustees in 2007.

1924 - 1943 First floor. Empire Dance Hall
 1951 – 1976 Wellington Association of Scottish Societies (WASS) Social Hall
 1976 – 1989 WASS sublet the hall as a community / music venue
 1989 – Morehu Social Services
 1990 – Local community manage bookings etc on an informal basis
 1998 – Thistle Hall Community Trust formed

1.4 Architect⁴

PENTY AND BLAKE

Francis Penty (1841-?) was born in Yorkshire. He was educated in York where he studied architecture, prior to becoming a pupil of J E Oates. On completing his articles he worked in Liverpool and Manchester before joining the Royal Engineers where he was engaged in the construction of new barracks. He later worked for the architectural branch of the London and North West Railway.

In 1887 Penty came to New Zealand, establishing a practice in Wellington. In his first ten years he designed no less than 150 private homes. Amongst his early works were the Convalescent Home, Oriental Bay; a warehouse for Townsend and Paul, Victoria Street; and the Wellington Wollen Company Warehouse in Jervois Quay. Penty also spent times as a Wellington City Councillor from 1892 - 95, where he was known for his belief in practicality before politics.

E. M. Blake (1865-1929) was born in Madras, India, the son of a missionary who, four years later, emigrated to New Zealand. Educated at Dunedin and Christchurch, he was articled to T. S. Lambert of Christchurch, and was architect for the Exhibition Building 1889 for which efficient service. he was presented with a silver medal by Lambert. Shortly after completing his articles he worked in Sydney and Melbourne, winning two architectural competitions and carrying out other major works there. Returning to New Zealand in 1894, he was architect to the South Canterbury Education Board for three years, and also practised in Timaru.

He joined the Public Works Department's architectural office in Wellington in 1901. The partnership of Penty and Blake won the competition for the design of the Hunter Building at Victoria University. Penty and Blake won second prize in the design for the Dunedin Public Library and, in association with James Bennie, was placed third in the competition for Parliament Buildings. He died in Wellington.

NZHPT Register entries for Penty & Blake include

- Carrigafoyle – 195 The Terrace (Category I)
- Early State House - 8 Patrick Street, Petone (Category II)
- Early State House – 18 Patrick Street, Petone (Category II)
- Early State House – 43 Adelaide Street, Petone (Category II)
- Hunter Building, Victoria University of Wellington (Category I)(WCC map 17 reference 171)
- James Smith's Department Store, corner 46-69 Cuba and Manners Street (Category II) (WCC map 16 reference 74/2)
- 120 – 126 Courtenay Place, Wellington (Category II) (WCC Map 16 reference 68/1)

Wellington City Council buildings listed on the Heritage Building Inventory include

- 1 – 5 Allen Street, map 16 reference 10/1
- 18-24 Allen Street, map 16 reference 10/5
- 24-26 Courtenay Place, map 16 reference 64/1
- Reid House (corner of Cuba and Vivian Street) map 16/ reference 87
- 15 Johnston Street, map 17 reference 162

⁴ WCC Heritage Inventory 2001 ref Appendix III

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

Thistle Hall is a two storey Edwardian Commercial style building. The building was originally designed to include two separate retail units on ground floor, and the northern retail unit had access via a stair to a warehouse space at first floor level which extended the full width of the building. The building was converted into a dance hall and the stair from ground to first floor replaced and relocated. The building is now used as a community hall with ground floor gallery and office space.

The upper windows on the Cuba Street elevation are deeply recessed into segmental arches with pronounced voussoirs. The windows on the Arthur Street elevation are plain in comparison. At each corner of the building there is a plain pilaster with a simplified capital. A series of slender pilasters are centred between the upper windows on the Arthur Street facade. There is no entablature but a simple cornice marks the bottom of the parapet which was stripped of detail on the Cuba Street elevation when it was rebuilt after the 1942 earthquake. The verandah, too, is missing.

There is an interesting use of iron 'hoops' to bond the brickwork, presumably to provide some lateral strength to the building and steel beams span the wide openings over the shop front windows and the cart dock entrance. The original cart dock floor was paved with jarrah blocks that had been dipped in molten tar (though these may have later been replaced with brick). The original kerosene store ceiling was constructed from railway irons (presumably iron sleepers) covered with 200mm of concrete, presumably as a precaution against fire. The shop front entrances have an encaustic tile floor finish that has recently been refurbished.

2.2 Materials⁵

Brick masonry building with concrete foundations and a corrugated iron (or mild steel) roof. Timber structural members to roof, floors and internal partitions.

- Concrete foundations
- Bricks – to be “of local Wellington origin”
- Hoop iron bond – 14 gauge galvanised hoop iron to be built into the brickwork at every 1200mm in height
- Arches – external window openings to be “2 half brick rim arches set in cement mortar.”
- Lintels – concrete lintels over square openings “have 2 lengths of old railway iron embedded within them...”
- Steel joists over shop front openings
- Ceiling for the kerosene store – “is formed with old railway irons placed at 600mm centres with a sheet of 24 gauge corrugated iron placed between each resting on the bottom flange.” All covered with 200mm concrete.
- Asphalt damp course
- Concrete floors – to the kerosene store, ground floor WC, ante and yard
- Copings – brick set on edge bedded in cement
- Bluestone ‘templates’ – “900mm long 350 mm wide and five courses of brickwork high. They are fixed under the steel joists.”

⁵ 1995 CONSERVATION PLAN PREPARED BY CHRISTOPHER KILBY - ARCH 281 - (1907 specification).

- Totara – timber lintels.
- Timber structural members – internal partitions, floors (except where concrete in some areas of the ground floor)& roof.
- Jarrah blocks – “The floor of the Cart Dock and crossing is formed with 150x75 x 125mm Jarrah blocks. These were dipped in boiling pitch then placed in position on a thin layer of sand. The paving was completed by coating with hot pitch and a thin layer of clean sand.”
- Corrugated iron roof
- Lead cappings – at junctions of hips and ridges

2.3 Setting

1993/1994 WCC Cityworks Division prepared drawings for earthquake strengthening to the Thistle Hall. Work included parapet strengthening, strengthening of corner columns, installation of crossbracing at first floor (floor) level and at ceiling level. The work appears to have been carried out in 1994⁶ but requires a search of building consents to verify.

The building occupies a prominent site on the route of the inner city bypass on Arthur Street (leading to Karo Drive). The north flank wall (originally the secondary façade to Arthur Street) is now a significant landmark to motorists as they approach the motorway access at the Willis Street, Karo Drive intersection. The building is also part of Block 7 of the Cuba Street Conservation Area.

Block 7 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 Arthur Street / Karo Drive. Thistle Hall is flanked by Arthur Street to the north and 297-301 Cuba Street (NZHPT Category II) to the south. There is a small area of pedestrian paving to the north of Thistle Hall at the original location of Arthur Street, and this paved area was installed when Arthur Street was re-aligned as part of the works to construct the Karo Drive. The buildings on the opposite side of the road include the NZHPT listed Category II Moran Building at 276-278 Cuba Street, 282 Cuba Street (the oldest surviving building on Cuba Street), the moderne style Lampard Flats at 284-286 Cuba Street (Category II) and 290 Cuba Street (Category II).



Thistle Hall from Karo Drive/Arthur Street intersection with Cuba Street. Image: Google Maps - ©2012 Google

⁶ From Georgina White, ‘Thistle Hall 1907 – 2007: 100 years of community’, commissioned by the Thistle Hall Board of Trustees in 2007.



View towards Thistle Hall from the Webb Street (south) end of Cuba Street - looking north. Image: Google Maps - ©2012 Google

3.0 References

Building Application form 1907 (WCC Archives)

Cyclopedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District] 1897.

<http://www.nzetc.org/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d13-d63.html>

Dictionary of Scottish Architects.

http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=201922

Du Plessis, Rosemary. 'Love and romance', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 22-Feb-12 URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/love-and-romance>

'Love and romance - Dances, love and courtship, 1840 to 1950', Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 29-Jun-11 URL:

<http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/love-and-romance/3>

Evening Post. Volume LXXVI, Issue 30, 4 August 1908, Page 7

Kilby, Christopher. Unpublished Conservation Plan Prepared for Arch 281.

Stones & Wises street directories

WCC Archives

White, Georgina. 'Thistle Hall 1907 – 2007: 100 years of community'. Commissioned by the Thistle Hall Board of Trustees in 2007,

http://www.thistlehall.org.nz/pdfs/thistle_hall_history-web.pdf

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 is a good representative example of Edwardian commercial architecture

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 is a landmark from the Arthur Street / Karo Drive inner city bypass, a major traffic route through Wellington on the approach to the motorway (SH1)

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?

The building makes a positive contribution to the significant collection of heritage buildings that form the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

Historic Value:

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

- The building is associated with Penty and Blake Architects
- The building is associated with a prominent local business owner – J Campbell, owner of the Oriental Tea Mart
- The building is associated with Empire Dance Hall
- The building is associated with the Wellington Association of Scottish Societies (WASS)

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

- The building is associated with dance hall culture of the early 20th Century.
- The building is associated with live music (in particular the punk music scene) in Wellington
- The building is associated with those who, in the 1980s & 1990s, organised protests against the construction of the inner city bypass in Wellington.
- The building is known as a local community venue and is associated with residents of Cuba Street and Te Aro.

Scientific Value:

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

- Wellington city

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?

- There is some innovative use of building materials and structure that may be of interest to building conservation specialists (hoop iron reinforcing, jarrah block paving (may have been removed), steel/concrete to kerosene store roof).

Social Value:

Public esteem: Is the item held in high public esteem?

- The building is held in high public esteem by the local community who manage, maintain, hire and use the facilities in the building

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 building is a significant community facility and has high amenity value to the local community.
- The building has remained (relatively) unchanged on the site for over 100 years and contributes 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?

- The building will have sentimental value to patrons of the Empire Dance Hall, as organised dances provided opportunities for courtship and romance for young men and women in the early twentieth century.
- The building was the centre of the Wellington Scottish community from 1951-1976

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 a good representative example of Edwardian commercial architecture

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 building has had few intrusive modern alterations and retains significant early or original building fabric (with the exception of removal of the original verandah;

replacement of the original parapet and the external cornice and parapet decoration; internal alterations to form the office kitchen and bathrooms).

Local/Regional/National/International

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

5.0 Appendix

Checklist – desktop research

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory		2012
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		2012
WCC Records – building file		2012
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)		
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		2012
Plan change?		
Heritage Area Report		yes
Heritage Area Spreadsheet		yes
Heritage items folder (electronic)		yes
HPT website		yes
HPT files		none
Conservation Plan		Yes (1995 Architecture Student)
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)		

WCC permits

00053:138:7718	293-295 Cuba Street, brick premises	Owner: H Campbell. Applicant: C H Dryden.	Building Permit/Consent	23 Jul 1907
00055:34:A3226	293-295 Cuba Street, alterations	Legal description: Part Town Acre 101. Owner: Protestant Hall Co. Builder: E A King. Application value: £600. Note: Corner of Cuba and Arthur Streets.	Building Permit/Consent	06 Aug 1924
00056:305:B24117	293-295 Cuba Street, reinstate hall - earthquake damage	Owner: Wellington City Council (WCC). Builder: E W Booth. Legal description: Pt Sec 101 Town Of Wellington. Application value: £290. Note: Corner of Cuba and Arthur.	Building Permit/Consent	09 Jul 1945
00277:550:16	Building: 293, 295 Cuba Street: Thistle Hall	Note: Part two contains preliminary drawings for the seismic strengthening of Thistle Hall (see memo 22nd April 1993, to Helen	File Map/plan	1989-1996

		Dariwick, re seismic strengthening of Thistle Hall).		
9200570	Property Featur	BUILDING HERITAGE ITEM (DISTRICT PLAN): Details migrated from RHS #570, (Restrictions and Hazards System - RHS System 1991-2006) on 28-06-2006	To be verified	20/01/1995
9201293	Property Featur	EARTHQUAKE RISK BUILDINGS: Details migrated from RHS #1293, (Restrictions and Hazards System - RHS System 1991-2006) on 28-06-2006	To be verified	2/08/1995
00078:1739:78155	293-295 Cuba Street, internal alterations, PIM		Building Permit /Consent	2001
00078:979:84886	293 Cuba Street, internal alterations	Owner: Wellington City Council. Applicant: Nationwide Building Certifiers Ltd. Legal description: Part Section 101 Town of Wellington. Application value: \$50,000.	Building Permit/ Consent	2002
00078:1369:122984	293 Cuba Street, refurbishment of kitchen, level 1	Owner: Wellington City Council. Applicant: Wellington City Council. Legal description: Pt Sec 101 Town of Wellington. Application value: \$31,000.	Building Permit/ Consent	2004
159999	RC - a Res.Con	Land use consent for signs on a heritage building	Completed	29/10/2007
00078:2951:194124	293 Cuba Street, Thistle Hall - Installation of new hydraulic lift. (aka 293-295 Cuba St)	Legal description: PT SEC 101 TOWN OF WELLINGTON. Owner: Wellington City Council. Applicant: Wellington City Council. Project value: \$49,000.	Building Permit/ Consent	2009
179933	Bdg StrengthInv	EPB - S124 Served - EXP 22/11/2025. Thistle Hall - WCC heritage	Notice Issued	23/11/2010