

Houses

143 & 145 Abel Smith Street



143-145 Abel Smith Street (Charles Collins – 2015)

Summary of heritage significance

- 143 & 145 Abel Smith Street are a pair of Victorian villas that were constructed at the same date for their developer/owner. They are good representative example of Villa-style and are distinguished by their unusual 'Italianate' towers.
- The two houses at 143 and 145 are local landmarks for their two, distinctive, 'Italianate' style towers.
- The buildings have a representative history that is typical of many houses and residences in and around Aro Valley.

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| District Plan: | Map 16, reference 5 |
| Legal Description: | Lots 2 & 3 DP 1215 |
| Heritage Area: | No |
| HPT Listed: | No |
| Archaeological Site: | Pre-1900 buildings / pre-1900 human activity on site, NZAA Central City Archaeological Area R27/270 |
| Other Names: | |
| Key physical dates: | 1899 |
| Architect / Builder: | Architect: James Bruce |
| Former uses: | Residential |
| Current uses: | Residential |
| Earthquake Prone Status: | Building Strength Inventory status 'Not Earthquake Prone' SR 169949 |

Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

The two houses at the top of Abel Smith Street are quirky adaptations of the grand Italianate style with features that have carried through New Zealand architecture since the turn of the century.

These houses are two of three built by the original owner, James Bruce, in 1899. Bruce owned a number of properties along Abel Smith Street, the two houses here are Lots 2 & 3, Bruce also owned 1 & 4.¹ A hand-written specification by James Bruce contained in the Permit records suggest that Bruce may have also designed the dwellings. Each of the two-storey houses accommodates four bedrooms and was constructed for £400.² The houses are standard Victorian villa designs apart from their unusual towers. The houses appear identical but their bargeboards and bay windows differ and they are at different levels, following the slope of the street. There is a small alleyway running between 143 and 145, while 145 and 147 would have shared a brick party wall.³

There was once a large shed constructed across the rear boundary of 143, 145 & 147 Abel Smith Street labelled 'Milk Shop', 'offices' and 'tool house.' This was accessed via the side yard to the west of No. 147. This appears to have since been demolished.

No.147 Abel Smith Street (also shown on the permit plan) survives, but the street façade has been over-clad and rendered, and the original windows replaced.

From the records, it appears that No.143 & 145 have for the most part been private residences, apart from the 1970s when No.145 was used as a boarding house.⁴

¹ Wellington City Archive. 00053:56:3567

² WCC Permit Records. permit no: Y 3567 and Architectural Survey: Southern Te Aro (1981).

³ Wellington City Council, '143-145 Abel Smith Street,' *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 1995* (Wellington City Council, 1995),

⁴ Wellington City Archive. 00009:443:9/429

1.2 Timeline of modifications



Elevation as proposed-143-147 Abel Smith Street (WC Archives 00053-56-3567)

- 1899 Building construction. (00053:56:3567)
- 1983 Repile of 143 Abel Smith Street. (00058:0:C62002).
- 1991 Additions and alterations to 145 Abel Smith Street – erect fire escapes. (00059:463:E22532)
- 2005 Addition to 143 Abel Smith Street-Deck. (00078:2367:137496).

1.3 Architect N/A- Designed by owner

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

These two, three storey, timber villas were designed to a relatively standard plan, each with a bay window and entrance from the street (north) elevation. The ground floor was comprised of a parlour in the room with the bay window facing the street, and a dining room to the rear (south). The kitchen, scullery and 'lumber room' were situated in a semi-basement, and each house had four bedrooms and a bathroom/WC on the first floor.

The buildings differ from their original permit drawings. The two distinctive entrance porch/ balcony/ 'Italianate' towers do not appear on the permit drawings and are difficult to date. They may have been an interpretation of the annotation 'balcony' written on the first-floor plan, or may have been a later addition. They are, however, distinctive elements that contribute to the streetscape and make these buildings an unusual version of a standard villa design.

The buildings are a near-identical pair, and can be differentiated by their bay windows, No.143 has a square bay, while No.145 is chamfered.

2.2 Materials

Timber weatherboard on timber structural framing
Corrugated mild steel roofing

2.3 Setting

The buildings are located at the upper end of Abel Smith Street, just before the point where it meets with the end of The Terrace. To the east, house number 143 is bordered by a house of similar size and age, while to the west house number 145 is adjoined by a Victorian Villa that has been much altered. Further down the street stands the Aston Towers apartment block. Because of the incline of the street, house number 145 is elevated above house number 143.

3.0 Sources

Wellington City Council, '143-145 Abel Smith Street,' *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 1995*.

Wellington City Archive

Wellington City Archive. 00053:56:3567

Wellington City Council Records

WCC Permit Records. permit no: Y 3567 and Architectural Survey: Southern Te Aro (1981).

Websites

Yumlush, Flickr, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/59128967@N00/438465076/>, accessed 17 September 2012.

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?*

143 & 145 Abel Smith Street are a pair of Victorian villas that were constructed at the same date for their developer/owner. They are good representative example of Villa-style and are distinguished by their unusual 'Italianate' towers.

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 two houses at 143 and 145 are local landmarks for their two, distinctive, 'Italianate' style towers.

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 buildings have group value as a pair of Victorian Villas that were built by the same developer in 1899 and been on-sold, owned and maintained as a pair ever since.

Historic Value:

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

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

The buildings have a representative history that is typical of many houses and residences in and around Aro Valley.

Scientific Value:

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

Pre- 1900 buildings, 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?

The buildings appear to have had few intrusive modern alterations or additions and contribute to the sense of place and continuity of Abel Smith Street.

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*

No's 143 & 145 are good representative examples of Victorian villa architecture that are distinguished by their unusual 'Italianate' towers.

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?*

These buildings retain authenticity of materials and have had little modification to the front facing facades.

Local/Regional/National/International

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

These buildings are of local importance due to the landmark quality that they bring to Abel Smith Street.

5.0 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*