

Commercial Building

28 Courtenay Place



Photo: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- This Edwardian Classical building was designed by notable architects Farr & Bennie.
- Its decorative façade makes considerable contribution to the Courtenay Place streetscape.
- It is part of an intact group of two-storey buildings on the north side Courtenay Place between Allen and Blair Streets.
- The facade retains authenticity in design, craftsmanship and materiality.

District Plan:	Map 16, Symbol 64/2
Legal Description:	Pt Sec 223 Town of Wellington (SO 10408)
Heritage Area:	Courtenay Place Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	Not listed.
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	Kitty O'Shea's Irish Bar
Key physical dates:	1906
Architect / Builder:	Architects: Farr & Bennie, Builder: T. Gillespie
Former uses:	Confectioners, Furnishers, Restaurant, Retail
Current uses:	Bar
Earthquake Prone Status:	SR174181 (Posted)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

The building at 28 Courtenay Place was designed by the architects Edward Farr and James Bennie for Francis Loudon, in 1906.¹ Irish-born Loudon was a property investor and a well-respected Wellingtonian.²

In the 1920s the premises was occupied by the Rowell family pastry and confectionery operation. This well-established father and son business had its beginnings in a Cuba Street premises in 1890. Their Courtenay Place business no doubt included the 'fine display of confectioner's ornamental flowers, the Mazaphan goods, wedding cakes, almond tortans, bread tortans, santartons' that they advertised in 1897.³

In the 1930s Irish-born George F. Browne operated a furnishing house in the building with the aid of his two sons. Browne was a Freemason and prominently associated with the Wellington business community.⁴ He sold an assortment of items, including frameless wall mirrors, cosy easy chairs, bedding, blankets, satin cushions, and other 'bargain's galore'.⁵

After Browne's death in the 1940s the premises was occupied by a series of restaurants. In 1930 alterations were made to the cafe on the ground floor and a new verandah added. Further (unspecified) changes were made in 1982 by builder J. Calder and, most recently, the building was upgraded as Kitty O'Shea's Irish Bar in 1997, to which further improvements were undertaken in 2006.⁶

¹ Wellington City Council, "28 Courtenay Place", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), COURT 8.

² "Personal Items", *Dominion*, Volume 9, Issue 2753, 24 April 1916, Page 4.

³ Cyclopaedia Co. Ltd, "Rowell and Son," in *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District* (Wellington: The Cyclopaedia Company Limited, 1897), Accessed August 15, 2012, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d35-d13.html>

⁴ "Funeral Notices", *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIX, Issue 119, 21 May 1940, Page 9.

⁵ "Courtenay Place Specials", *Evening Post*, Volume CXXI, Issue 66, 18 March 1936, Page 1.

⁶ Wellington City Council, "28 Courtenay Place", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), COURT 8.



No. 28 Courtenay Place with 'The Ritz' signage, behind the white van, 1939.
(PAColl-0128-07, Neilson George Goldie Collection, Alexander Turnbull Library)

1.2 Timeline of modifications⁷

- 1906 Building constructed
- 1930 Verandah replaced. (00056:107:B9800)
- 1936 Alterations to the shop front. (00056:173:B15313)
- 1974 Café alterations. (00058:957:C42028)
- 1977 Two toilets installed. (00058:1102:C47647)
- 1993 Verandah altered and repaired, building strengthened. (00060:10:378)
- 1997 Additions to first floor area and new internal stairs. (00078:844:29338)
- 2006 Restaurant additions and alterations. (00078:2046:141840)

1.3 Occupation history

Occupants included the following:

Thomas Rowell, pastry cook. (Stones 1910-11 to 1925).

George F. Browne, furnishing house. (Stones 1930 - 1935).

The Ritz Ltd., restaurant. (Stones 1940 - 1945).

Canton Caf, (Wises 1950-1 to 1985).

Bar-B-Q King (Wises 1990).

Kitty O'Shea's Irish Bar (2012)

⁷ Ibid.

1.4 Architect

Farr & Bennie

James Bennie was born in Ayrshire, Scotland. He emigrated to New Zealand in 1880 and settled in Brunnertown near Greymouth. In the early 1890s he attended the Working Men's College in Melbourne, Australia, where he studied under artist and architect Thomas Searell. On completion of his studies he returned to Greymouth and set up in practice as an architect. In 1903 Bennie moved to Wellington and went into practice with E.C. Farr before establishing his own practice in 1905.

Some of Bennie's designs include the Albermarle Hotel, Wellington (1905), the Carnegie Library at Levin (1910), the Karori Methodist Church (1912), and the Oriental Bay Tea Kiosk (1912, demolished 1978). He designed a number of theatres including Kings (1910), Queens (1916), the Crown (1916) and Paramount (1917), all in Wellington. He was responsible for the design of many houses including the Wedge, Glenbervie Terrace (1906) and his own house in Salamanca Road (1907), both in Wellington. He also had an interest in prefabricated house design.

Bennie was an inaugural member of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, founded in 1905, and was later elected a Fellow. He retired in 1935 and his son Malcolm, who had joined his father in 1927, continued to run the practice.⁸

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

No. 28 Courtenay Place is a diminutive two storey Edwardian Classical building enriched with an abundance of Classical ornamentation. There are four pairs of Corinthian pilasters at first floor level, with a broad semi-circular window in the middle bay and a smaller one on either side. There is a shallow segmental arch above the middle window with a decorative wreath of fruit and flowers and the top of the parapet is adorned with an urn on a pedestal. The urn is a rare survivor in this earthquake-prone city. The building has one of the most decorative facades in Courtenay Place, and it contributes to an important group of two storey buildings between Allen and Blair Streets.⁹

The ground floor shop fronts are a sensitive and well-designed modern alteration.

2.2 Materials

Masonry structure, cement render and timber joinery.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

2.3 Setting

No. 28 is located in a block of four buildings on the northern side of Courtenay Place bounded by Allen and Blair Streets. All four buildings in this block are two-storeys. Two of the buildings – No. 24 and No.28 – were built particularly early.

At the eastern end of the block is the modest, two-storey Hummingbird Eatery and Bar. Adjacent to this is No. 24 which, constructed in 1894, has a simple but handsome symmetrical façade. On the western side of No. 28 and on a corner site bounded by Allen Street is another of the oldest buildings in Courtenay Place, dating from 1901 and has an elegantly simple presence.

The buildings, taken as a group, are mainly commercial in nature and wider setting of Courtenay Place Heritage Area bustles with eateries, banks and small businesses. As a group they contribute to the streetscape and character of the Courtenay Place Heritage Area.

3.0 Sources

CT WN27A/562, Land Information New Zealand

Cyclopedia Co. Ltd. "Rowell and Son." In *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District*, Wellington: The Cyclopedia Company Limited, 1897. Accessed: August 15, 2012.

<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d35-d13.html>

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

Wellington City Council, *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 1995*. Wellington City Council, 1995.

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

Wellington City Council, *Courtenay Place Heritage Area spreadsheet*. Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006.

Wellington City Archives

"28 Courtenay Place - verandah alterations", 1930, 00056:107:B9800, Wellington City Archives.

"28 Courtenay Place - alterations to premises", 1936, 00056:173:B15313, Wellington City Archives.

"28 Courtenay Place - café alterations", 1974, 00058:957:C42028, Wellington City Archives.

"28 Courtenay Place - 2 toilets", 1977, 00058:1102:C47647, Wellington City Archives.

"28 Courtenay Place – alterations", 1993, 00060:10:378, Wellington City Archives.

"28 Courtenay Place - additions to first floor area at Kitty O'Shea's", 1997, 00078:844:29338, Wellington City Archives.

"28 Courtenay Place - restaurant additions and alterations", 2006, 00078:2046:141840, Wellington City Archives.

Newspapers

"Courtenay Place Specials", *Evening Post*, Volume CXXI, Issue 66, 18 March 1936.

"Funeral Notices", *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIX, Issue 119, 21 May 1940.

"Personal Items", *Dominion*, Volume 9, Issue 2753, 24 April 1916.

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?*

This building is designed in the Edwardian Classical style and has one of the most ornate facades in Courtenay Place.

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 makes a contribution to the character of the streetscape.

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?*

It contributes to an important group of two storey buildings on Courtenay Place, between Allen and Blair Streets.

The building is part of an important group of heritage buildings which together form the Courtenay Place Heritage Area. Although most of the buildings were constructed in the first half of the 20th century, there are significant differences in age and style among some of the buildings in this group.

Historic Value:

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

The building was designed by notable architects Farr & Bennie.

The building has been in commercial use since it was built and counts notable Wellingtonian businessmen Thomas Rowell and George Browne amongst its previous occupants.

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

This building is associated with the commercial growth of Courtenay Place and the Wellington CBD.

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?*

This building has been part of the streetscape of Courtenay Place for over 100 years and contributes to the sense of place and continuity for the Courtenay Place 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 façade retains authenticity in design, craftsmanship and materiality.

Local/Regional/National/International

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

The building has local importance as contributes to the Courtenay Place Heritage Area.

4.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory	Y	
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
WCC Records – building file	Y	No original plans.
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)	Y	
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
Plan change?		
Heritage Area Report	Y	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	Y	
Heritage items folder (electronic)	Y	
HPT website	Y	
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	

Background research

WCC Permits

00056:107:B9800	28 Courtenay Place, Verandah alterations	Legal description: Pt Sec 223 (Town Of Wellington SO 10408). Owner: A Milligan. Builder: J Calder. Application value: £96. Note: Replacing verandah, existing one in good condition	Building Permit/Consent	19 Jul 1930
00056:173:B15313	28 Courtenay Place, alterations to premises	Legal description: Part town acre 223. Owner: McKenzie. Builder: Tait and Hutchings. Application value: £67.	Building Permit/Consent	1936
00058:957:C42028	28 Courtenay Place, café alterations	Legal description: Part Section 223 (Town of Wellington SO 10408). Owner: J Chin. Builder: PJ Zwart. Application value: \$2700	Building Permit/Consent	20 Dec 1974
00058:1102:C47647	28 Courtenay Place, 2 toilets	Legal description: Part Section 223 (Town of Wellington SO 10408). Owner: Yee Chin Limited. Builder: Van Mil and Toulis. Application value: \$3500	Building Permit/Consent	28 Jun 1977
00060:10:378	28 Courtenay Place,	Owner: Steven Firth. Applicant: Steven Firth. Legal description:	Building Permit/Consent	14

	alterations	Part Town Acre 223. Application value: \$50,000. Note: Alteration to a night club and strengthening of building.		May 1993
00078:84 4:29338	28 Courtenay Place, additions to first floor area at Kitty O'Shea's		Building Permit/Consent	1997
00078:47 0:44569	28 Courtenay Place, renewal of stormwater drainage	Owner: Barrie Lei. Applicant: EG Glennie Ltd. Legal Description: Lot 1 DP 17163. Application Value: \$2,800.	Building Permit/Consent	1998
00078:83 4:87003	28 Courtenay Place, relay section of sewer and stormwater from boundary to exit door in alleyway about 15m including removal of buchan trap		Building Permit/Consent	2002
00078:20 46:14184 0	28 Courtenay Place, restaurant additions and alterations	Owner: Barry Dayuan Lei. Applicant: Henry K Rombel. Legal description: Pt Sec 223 Town Of Wellington. Application value: \$20,000.	Building Permit/Consent	2006