Apartment Building

251-255 Cuba Street



251-255 Cuba Street (Image: Charles Collins, 2014)

Summary of heritage significance

- 251-255 is an understated Moderne/Art Deco mixed use apartment/commercial building. It has architectural value for the retention of original design and building fabric.
- The building has historic value for its association with the designer, Wellington architectural firm Dawson and King.
- The building makes a distinct contribution to the townscape of Cuba Street, and contributes to the sense of place and continuity of the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

District Plan:	Map 16, reference 91/2	
Legal Description:	Lot 6 DP 19320	
Heritage Area:	Cuba Street Heritage Area	
HPT Listed:	Historic Place Category 2, Register Number 5364	
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270	
Other Names:		
Key physical dates:	1932	
Architect / Builder:	J.M. Dawson & King	
Former uses:	Shops and flats (retail / residential)	
Current uses:	Shops and flats (retail / residential)	
Earthquake Prone Status:	124 Served, expires 23/5/26 (SR 163384)	

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



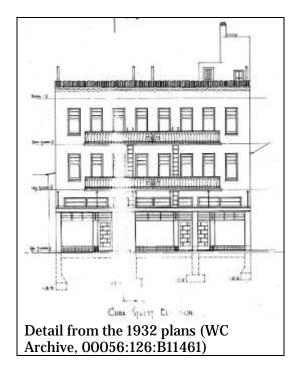
1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

This building was designed by the architectural firm J.M. Dawson and King, and built for the Downes family. The permit was issued in February 1932.

The original plans show three shops on the ground floor and two flats on each of the upper floors. The layouts of the flats are mirrored on each floor, and are repeated over the two floors. A small laundry was built on the south corner of the roof.

The Downes siblings (George Alfred, Ada Rotermind and William Stacey), for whom the building was built, owned and constructed many buildings in the Cuba Street vicinity. Their father, Samuel Stacey Downes, emigrated from England to Wellington in 1852.¹ In Wellington he made his money in the hotel business, first with the Crown and Anchor Hotel on Lambton Quay, and then the Pier Hotel.²



² "Death of Mr S.S. Downes," Evening Post, Volume LV, Issue 114, 16 May 1898, Page 6

Brothers George and William Downes were both dentists. George, the older brother, became a dentist in 18913 and went into a practice with Richard C Bulkley on Willis Street.⁴ In 1894 Hubert John Eames joined the partnership.5 William became a dentist in 1899.6 Shortly after this in 1901, the brothers went into partnership and had a dental surgery built on Cuba Street⁷ which they practiced from until the 1930s.8 This building still stands at 201 Cuba Street. Other buildings known to be owned and built by the Downes family include: 143-147 Vivian St (1900), 241-243 Cuba Street (1909), and "Cuba Court" apartments at 267-273 Cuba St (1941). 9

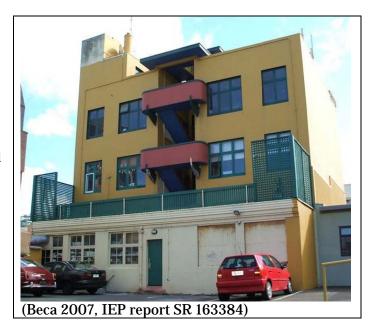
The Downes family Estate owned this building until 1972. Since this time the building has been sold multiple times and in 1991 was unit titled. Many retail and

DET THE DAST CLEVATION Detail from the 1932 plans (WC

Archive, 00056:126:B11461)

residential tenants have passed through the building over the years.

The building has been subject to various alterations since it was constructed, particularly to the shop fronts. Despite these changes the façade of the building (particularly the first and second floors) remains much as it was designed with a high level of original fabric and detailing. The rear of the building retains a reasonably level of authenticity, despite alterations including a small roof built over the stairwell in 2006.



³ "Ordinary Meeting", Evening Post, Volume XLI, Issue 66, 19 March 1891, Page 3

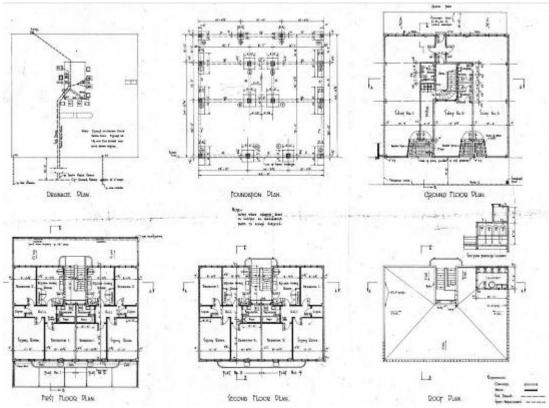
⁴ Evening Post, Volume XLII, Issue 81, 2 October 1891, Page 2

⁵ Evening Post, Volume XLVIII, Issue 96, 20 October 1894, Page 4

⁶ "Dental Examination", Wanganui Chronicle, Volume XLIII, Issue 15000, 18 December 1899, Page 2

⁷ "Upper Cuba Street, surgery," February 6, 1901, 00053:69:4237, Wellington City Archives. ⁸ Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (block 5)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006). 9 Ibid.

1.2 Timeline of modifications



Detail from the 1932 plans (WC Archive, 00056:126:B11461)

- 1932 Building constructed (00056:126:B11461)
- 1973 Shop alterations (00058:838:C37490)
- 1974 Shelter (00058:900:C39922)
- 1991 Additions and alterations upgrade four flats on level 1 (00059:480:E23128)
- 1991 Business additions and alterations shop (00059:508:E24117)
- 1998 Shop alterations (253 Cuba Street) (00078:763:40183)
- 2006 Roof for exposed exterior stairwell (00078:1600:71011)

1.3 Occupation history

4 flats at 251. Long-term tenants include: Aubrey Diment, watchmaker (Stones 1945, Wises 1950-51) Jonathan Fergusson, labourer (Wises 1961-62, 1967-68, 1971-72) Tenants not listed after this time.

Unison Piano Service (255) (Stones 1945, 1950-51) New Zealand Music Supplies (1961-62, 1967-68, 1971-72) Various shops changing frequently after this time (Wises 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990). 10

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¹⁰ Ibid.

1.4 Architect

J.M. Dawson and J.I. King

Joseph McClatchie Dawson (1877-1956) was born in the Wairarapa. His father was a contractor in the district and Dawson's education included a background in construction work. In 1900 he left New Zealand and travelled to South Africa, England and Australia, returning in 1906 to establish his own architectural practice in Wellington. His buildings include the T. G. McCarthy Building, Willis Street (1913); Hatricks Motor Garage (now Manthel Motors), corner Taranaki and Wakefield Streets (1913); and the Hope Gibbons Building, Dixon Street (1925).

Dawson was an inaugural member of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, formed in 1905, and became a Fellow of the Institute in 1913. He was its president from 1938-1940. He formed close associations with the entrepreneurs of the burgeoning motor vehicle industry, designing showrooms, assembly plants and office buildings for, among others, Hatrick and Co. and the Colonial Motor Company.

In 1929 he appointed Jack Ian King (1900-1972), an architect and engineer, as his first partner. This partnership was responsible for several notable buildings such as the 1932 Art Deco façade of the James Smith Building on the corner of Cuba and Manners Street.

Joseph's son Jim Dawson joined the firm and in 1946 Dawson entered semi-retirement, retiring in 1948. W Keith Cook joined the firm which became King, Cook and Dawson. The firm was highly successful with a number of commissions and the establishment of numerous new clients. Cook left the practice in 1957 and it went on as King and Dawson. 12

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The building is an understated, but carefully scaled, three storey apartment block with a Moderne influence evident in the graceful sweep of the upper floor balconies and an Art Deco cornice trim at the parapet.¹³

The cast-iron railing of the two shallow balconies, designed as fire escapes, is the main element of interest. The plain parapet has a simple pattern of moulding on its top edge, influenced by Art Deco. The double-hung windows are regularly spaced, with shallow segmental or triangular hoods. These hoods do not appear on the original drawings and may have been added later. They are stylised, almost abstract elements, and the juxtaposition of the two over the same storey reads as a mildly playful gesture on the part of the architect.¹⁴

¹¹ Historic Places Trust, "Dawson, Joseph McClatchie.", *Professional Biographies*, accessed 4 September 2012, http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?ID=47

¹² Historic Places Trust, "King, Cook and Dawson - Architectural Partnership," *Professional Biographies*, accessed October 16, 2012,

 $[\]underline{http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=King \underline{\%2C+Cook+and+Dawson}$

¹³ Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Report* (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006), 44.

¹⁴ Wellington City Council, "255 Cuba Street," Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 35.

2.2 Materials

The construction is reinforced concrete on concrete foundations and piles. Reinforced concrete beams support concrete floors on all levels and the concrete roof.¹⁵

2.3 Setting

The building sits among a row of old and modern buildings of varying scales and architecture on Cuba Street between Vivian Street and Abel Smith Street.

To the north the building is adjoined by a temporary-looking modern single storey building. To the south the block ends with a car yard fronting Abel Smith Street.

On the other side of the road is a group of small Victorian timber buildings, one of which is occupied by Fidel's café. This is joined to the north by the Wellington Trawlers complex, which includes a small modern single-storey street-front shop and a parking area and several other unremarkable modern commercial buildings set back from the street front.

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¹⁵ Ibid.

3.0 Sources

Bowman, Ian. 1950's Buildings: Lower Hutt City's post-war modern movement buildings. (Hutt City Council, 2002). Accessed October 15, 2012, www.ianbowman.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/1950s-booklet-final.doc

Cyclopedia Co. Ltd, "Downes, Samuel Stacey," in *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District* (Wellington: The Cyclopedia Company Limited, 1897), accessed October 16, 2012, <a href="http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d6-d15.html#Cyc01Cycl-fig-Cyc01Cy

Historic Places Trust, "Dawson, Joseph McClatchie.", *Professional Biographies*, accessed 4 September 2012,

 $\frac{http://www.\bar{historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.a}{spx?ID=47}$

Historic Places Trust, "King, Cook and Dawson - Architectural Partnership," *Professional Biographies*, accessed October 16, 2012, http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=King%2C+Cook+and+Dawson

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

Wellington City Council, "255 Cuba Street," Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 35.

Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (block 5)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

Newspapers

"Ordinary Meeting", Evening Post, Volume XLI, Issue 66, 19 March 1891, Page 3

Evening Post, Volume XLII, Issue 81, 2 October 1891, Page 2

Evening Post, Volume XLVIII, Issue 96, 20 October 1894, Page 4

"Death of Mr S.S. Downes," Evening Post, Volume LV, Issue 114, 16 May 1898, Page 6

"Dental Examination", *Wanganui Chronicle*, Volume XLIII, Issue 15000, 18 December 1899, Page 2

Wellington City Archives

"Upper Cuba Street, surgery," February 6, 1901, 00053:69:4237, Wellington City Archives.

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?

251-255 is an understated Moderne/Art Deco mixed use apartment/commercial building. It has architectural value for the retention of original design and building fabric.

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, with its Moderne facade, makes a distinct contribution to the Cuba Street Heritage 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 building has historic value for its association with the designer, Wellington architectural firm Dawson and King.

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?

The building is located in the Central City archaeological site, reference 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?

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 is part of a group of historic buildings of varying ages and purposes on Cuba Street which contribute 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?

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 representative of 1930s apartment blocks influenced by Moderne and Art Deco design.

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 facade of the building is in reasonably authentic condition with a high level of original detailing, despite modifications to the ground floor shop fronts.

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 importance, as it contributes to the Cuba Street 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	1041-06-CUB255
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)	Y	
HPT website	Y	
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)		

Background research

DOWNES

Lot 4, section 127 Owned section 127 (?) (00056:126:B11461)

George Alfred Downes

- died 14/06/1962 aged 93
- born c1869
- dentist

Miss Ada Rotermund Downes

- died 27/06/1946 aged 74
- born c1872
- Widow? "Miss"

William Stacey Downes

- died 5/3/1953 aged 79
- born c1874
- dentist

CUBA ST BUILDINGS OWNED BY DOWNES FAMILY (Not comprehensive – only according to heritage area spreadsheets)

Block 5 spreadsheet 201 Cuba St/Lot 1 DP 1218
"Orsinis"

1901

McKay and MacGregor

Ownership:

George Downes, William Downes and Ada Downes? to 1937 (writing v. faint on CT115/37).

Transferred all shares to George Downes 1937 (CT115/37). Owned until 1950.

Occupation:

Downes Brothers, dentists (Stones1905,1910,1915-16,1920,1925,1930).

241-243 Cuba St/Lot 4 DP 19320

Swonderful

1909

William Chatfield

Ownership:

Francis Sidey, settler, 1900-1922 (Application 4259 & CT190/4), George Downes, dentist, Ada Downes, spinster, and William Downes, dentists, 1922-1937 (CT190/4), William Downes, 1937-1957 (CT190/4), Transmission to George Downes, dentist, and Adrian Treadwell, solicitor, as executors, 1958 (CT190/4). Adrian Treadwell and Shane Treadwell 1959-1960 (CT808/3) NB: Francis Sidey. The Downes family may have leased the land and constructed the building as Ada Downes is listed as owner on the building permit. No leased is recorded on the CT. Occupation:

Archers Drapery

143-147 Vivian St/Pt Sec 128 T.O.W

Recycle Boutique 1900 W G Emeny

Block 6 & 7 267-273 Cuba St/Lot 1 DP 18829

1941

"Cuba Court" - block of flats

Dawson & King.

Original owner: George Downes

INFORMATION ON THE DOWNES FAMILY Compiled by Moira Smith for 201 Cuba Street

The building at 201 Cuba Street was constructed as a dental practice for George Alford Downes and William Stacey Downes. ¹⁶ The permit was issued in February 1901 and the building was designed for use as a dental surgery with a waiting room, 'workroom', 'chloroform room' and scullery on the ground floor, and a surgery, two further waiting rooms, a workroom and a lavatory on the first floor. ¹⁷ The Downes family also appear to have owned land/buildings in Ingestre (Vivian) Street, ¹⁸ 129 Upper Willis Street, ¹⁹ and Majoribanks Street. ²⁰

Downes Brothers, dentists (Stones1905,1910,1915-16,1920,1925,1930).

The building at 201 Cuba Street was constructed as a dental practice for George Alford Downes and William Stacey Downes.²¹ The building was designed for use as a dental surgery and there was a waiting room, 'workroom', 'chloroform room' and scullery on the ground floor, and a surgery, two further waiting rooms, a workroom and a lavatory on the first floor.²² The Downes

¹⁶ NZHPT Field Record Form 1984

¹⁷ WCC Archives – original building consent application ref 4237.

¹⁸ Page 2 Advertisements Column 5. Evening Post, Volume LX, Issue 103, 29 October 1900, Page 2

¹⁹ The Cyclopedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District] 1897. http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d6-d15.html

²⁰ NZHPT Field Record Form 1984

²¹ NZHPT Field Record Form 1984

²² WCC Archives – original building consent application ref 4237.

family also appear to have owned land/buildings in Ingestre (Vivian) Street, ²³ 129 Upper Willis Street, ²⁴ and Majoribanks Street. ²⁵

1835 Samuel Stacey Downes was born in Suffolk, England²⁶
1852 S. S Downes emigrated to NZ on the 'Slains Castle'

S.S Downes managed of the Crown and Anchor Hotel on Lambton Quay

Circa 1870s S.S Downes part owned and built the Pier Hotel

1886 Samuel Stacey Downes retired

1886/7 George Alfred Downes attended Wanganui Collegiate²⁷ 1887 – 1891 William Stacey Downes attended Wanganui Collegiate

March 1891 Wellington branch of the Wanganui Collegiate Old Boys Association

meeting notes that Geo. Downes recently passed his 'examination as a

dentist^{'28}

October 1891 George A Downes went into partnership with Richard C Bulkley Dentist at

91 Willis Street, Wellington 29

October 1894 Hubert John Eames joined the partnership of Bulkley and Downes³⁰
*Mr. H. Fielder, furniture manufacturer, Manners-street, has just

"Mr. H. Fielder, furniture manufacturer, Manners-street, has just completed for Messrs Bulkley, Downes, and Eames, surgeon dentists, of Upper Willis-street, two handsome dentist's chairs, which have been pronounced by several experts in the furniture trade and the dental profession to be unique of their kind. The framework is of American walnut wood grown in the Manawatu district, and the upholstery is of the best Morocco leather, tanned in Dunedin. The chair may be raised or depressed to any angle by means of a treadle, worked by hydraulic power, and by means of a simple ratchet attachment, the invention of Mr. Fielder, the seat may be adjusted to the height of the patient without causing the

least inconvenience. It is claimed that the chairs can be supplied for at least 25 per cent, less than similar operating chairs can be imported for."³¹

Unknown date pre 1897 S.S Downes contributed £100 towards the construction of St

Peter's (cnr Willis and Ghuznee Streets) church spire. 32

S.S Downes resided at 129 Upper Willis Street and it was noted in the

Cyclopedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District] that ... "Mr. Downes, who is a member of the Masonic fraternity, has a daughter and three sons, the eldest of whom is a partner in the firm of Bulkley, Downes

and Eames, dentists, Wellington."33

1897 Cyclopedia of New Zealand entry for Bulkley, Downes and Eames

... "Bulkley, Downes and Eames (Richard C. Bulkley, George A. Downes,

and H. J. Eames), Surgeon Dentists, 91 Willis Street, Wellington.

Telephone 216. Bankers, Union Bank of Australia." 34

May 1898 Obituary of S.S Downes appeared in the Evening Post newspaper³⁵ December 1899 W. S. Downes (Wellington) passed the North Island Dental Board

Examination. 36

²³ Page 2 Advertisements Column 5. Evening Post, Volume LX, Issue 103, 29 October 1900, Page 2

²⁴ The Cyclopedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District] 1897. http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d6-d15.html

²⁵ NZHPT Field Record Form 1984

²⁶ The Cyclopedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District] 1897. http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d6-d15.html

²⁷ WANGANUI COLLEGIATE SCHOOL, REGISTER 1854 - 1947

 $^{^{28}}$ ORDINARY MEETING. Evening Post, Volume XLI, Issue 66, 19 March 1891, Page 3 $\,$

²⁹ Page 2 Advertisements Column 3. Evening Post, Volume XLII, Issue 81, 2 October 1891, Page 2

 ³⁰ Page 4 Advertisements Column 3. Evening Post, Volume XLVIII, Issue 96, 20 October 1894, Page 4
 ³¹ Page 2 Advertisements Column 5. Evening Post, Volume XLVIII, Issue 127, 27 November 1894, Page 2

³² The Cyclopedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District] 1897. http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d22-d11.html

³³ The Cyclopedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District] 1897. http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d6-d15.html

³⁴ The Cyclopedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District] 1897. http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d27-d2.html

³⁵ DEATH OF MR S. S. DOWNES. Evening Post, Volume LV, Issue 114, 16 May 1898, Page 6

February 1900 "Mr Downes, dentist" advertised a practice at 129 Willis Street³⁷
May 1902 to May 1903 Messrs Downes brothers, dentists advertised a practice at 102a
Cuba Street the address was noted as next to the National Bank.³⁸

Flats to Replace Cottages.

A noticeable feature of the monthly reports to the City Council on the issue of building permits is the increasing number of applications for permission to erect flats in the city, though for the most part the proposed buildings are comparatively small. A block of eight flats, in two storeys, to be erected in place of a line of old cottages in Wigan Street for the Downes Estate, introduces a rather different style of housing to Wellington, and may be the forerunner of other structures of its type in replacing houses which are no longer of the standard necessary for the maintenance of public health. Each flat is of four rooms and is fitted with modern conveniences, and a feature of the block is that though each is selfcontained there are no entrances on the street frontage, a provision which makes for a greater degree of privacy. The plans were prepared by Messrs. Dawson and King, and the successful tenderer is Mr. George D. Dick, the contract price being under £6000.

Evening Post, Volume CXX, Issue 79, 30 September 1935, Page 8

³⁶ DENTAL EXAMINATION. Wanganui Chronicle, Volume XLIII, Issue 15000, 18 December 1899, Page 2... "WELLINGTON, December 16. Eight candidates, from different parts of the colony presented themselves for examination at Wellington yesterday in connection with the North Island Dental Board. The following were successful W. S. Downes (Wellington), J. E. Bain and P. T Houston (Christchurch), K. Caro (Napier), and H. McNeall (Wanganui)."

³⁷ Page 4 Advertisements Column 3. Evening Post, Volume LIX, Issue 39, 15 February 1900, Page 4

³⁸ Page 4 Advertisements Column 2. Evening Post, Volume LXIII, Issue 117, 17 May 1902, Page 4