

Edilson's Building

173 Cuba Street



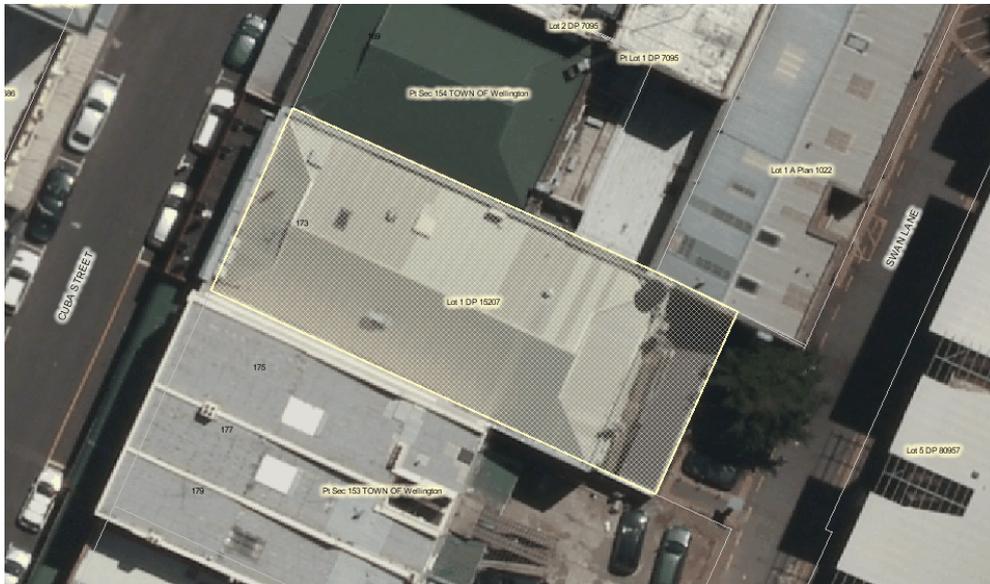
Photo: Edilson Building (*Charles Collins, 2014*)

Summary of heritage significance

- Behind the massive modern balcony of the Edilson Building is an elegantly composed Stripped Classical masonry building of two stories, accented with Art Deco-inspired details. The first floor façade remains largely intact with a high level of original detailing, despite the modifications to the first floor windows and ground floor retail space.
- The building has historic value for its long use as the City Rifle Range, and the long-standing home of the Wellington Fisherman's Co.
- The building makes a contribution to the Cuba Street Heritage Area, but the aesthetic and architectural value been diminished by the addition of the poorly- conceived balcony in 2002.

District Plan:	Map 16, reference 86/1
Legal Description:	Lot 1 DP15207
Heritage Area:	Cuba Street Heritage Area (block 4)
HPT Listed:	Category II, reference 5343
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	Johnson and Edilson Building / Silvio's / Indigo / San Francisco Bath House
Key physical dates:	Built 1928. Balcony added 2002.
Architect / Builder:	Architect: J.M Dawson
Former uses:	Commercial
Current uses:	Commercial
Earthquake Prone Status:	S124 served, expires 27/10/2025 (SR163478)

Extent:



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

This building was designed by Wellington architect, J.M. Dawson, and was built for Simon Edilson, a hotel proprietor. The permit was issued in January 1928.

The design incorporated three long narrow shops on the ground floor with deep display windows. A corridor on the left hand side of the building led to stairs up to the first floor which was a large open warehouse space. James Godber's timber confectionary shop was removed from the site prior to construction. The building was finished by late September 1928, when the shops and two buildings at rear (suitable for warehouses or factories) were advertised to let in the *Evening Post*.¹

In the early 20th century, the buildings along Cuba Street were confined to a surprisingly narrow range of uses, dominated by clothiers and draperies.² Over time this gradually changed, with a broader range of occupants appearing, including hairdressers, photographers, fruiterers, butcheries, restaurants and cafés, a private hotel, chemists, bakeries and fishmongers. Some other, surprising uses also appeared. For instance, the Edilson Building was the home of the City Rifle Range for over 40 years, as well as being the long-standing home of the Wellington Fish Co. The building has had a variety of other uses over the years: as a furniture warehouse, shoe-store, restaurant, upholsterers, boot-makers, and night club.³

By this time, Cuba Street had changed and purely commercial rather than mixed use buildings were being built, as illustrated by Edilson's building.

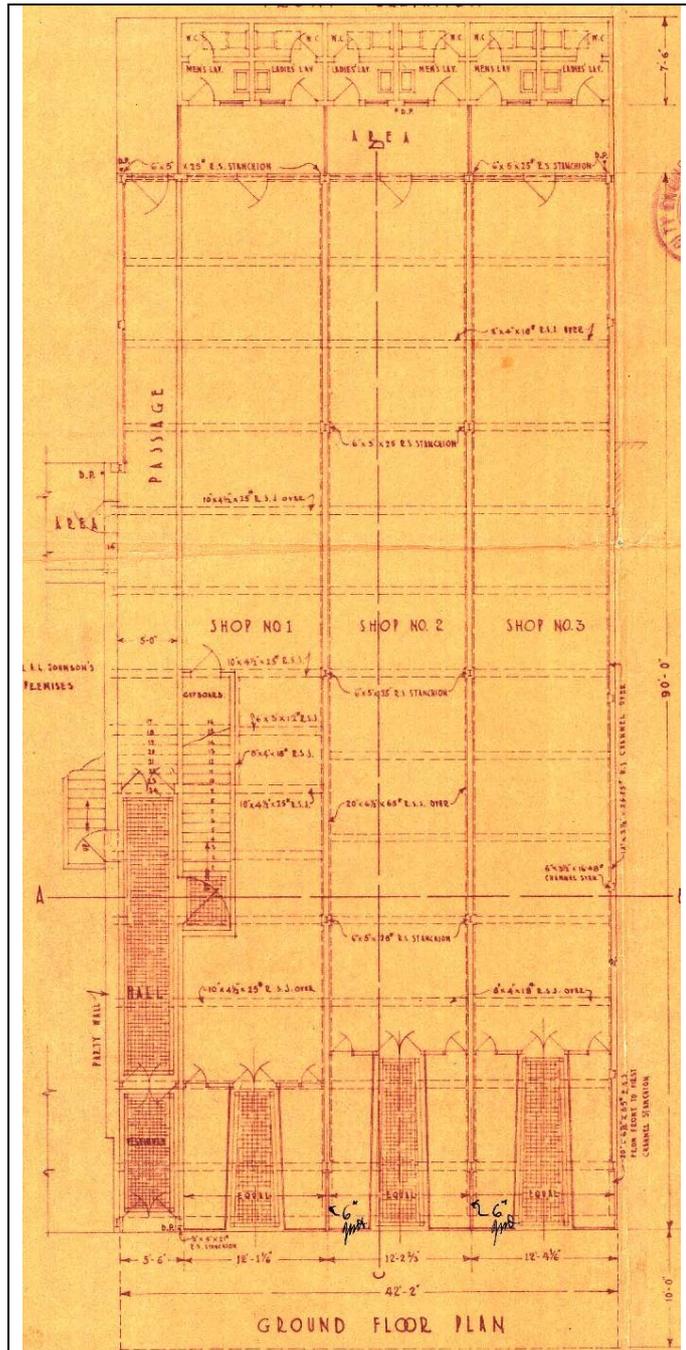
¹ *Evening Post*, Volume CVI, Issue 68, 29 September 1928, Page 2

² Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Report*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

³ Wellington City Council, "173 Cuba Street", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 24.

1.2 Timeline of modifications

- 1928 Construction. Note: Godber's wooden building removed from site. (00056:48:B4681)
- 1953 Shop front. (00056:457:B34675)
- 1982 Shop front alterations (00058:0:C60540)
- 1989 Night club additions and alterations (00059:348:E19010)
- 1996 Restaurant additions and alterations (00061:307:15352)
- 1998 Construction of staff toilet and relocation of bar facilities (00078:391:39273)
- 1999 Internal alterations: installation of gib acoustic barrier to existing ceiling (00078:326:50695)
- 2002 Balcony addition and new window joinery (00078:922:86914)
- 2003 Internal fit-out for sushi bar, ground floor (00078:1337:110247)
- 2004 New bathroom facilities, mezzanine and building egress (00078:1409:122811)
- 2004 Office building alterations, level 2 (00078:2148:116279)
- 2006 Restaurant additions and alterations for San Francisco Bath House (00078:2192:148072)
- 2009 Restaurant re-fitout including new kitchen, accessible toilet and expanded indoor seating. (00078:2844:187972)



1.3 Occupation history ⁴

1928	Co-operative Furniture Warehouse (1928) ⁵
1929-1972	City Rifle Range (1929 ⁶ , Stones1930, 1935, 1940, 1945, Wisers1950-51, 1955, 1961-62, 1967-68, 1971-72)
1935	Fisherman's Co-op Ltd (Stones1935)
1945-1985	Wellington Fisheries (Stones 1945, Wisers1950-51, 1955, 1961-62, 1967-68, 1971-72, 1975, 1980, 1985)
1940-1980	Waites Shoe Stores Ltd (Stones1940, 1945, Wisers1950-51, 1955, 1961-62, 1967-68, 1971-72, 1975, 1980)
1985	House of Oak & Mahogany (Wisers1985, 1990) Silvio's
1999 – 2007	Indigo Bar
2007 – 2012	San Francisco Bath House
2003 – 2012	Wasabi Sushi Bar
? - 2012	Ram's Restaurant
? - 2012	Save the Children

1.4 Architect

Joseph McClatchie Dawson (1877-1956)⁷

Joseph Dawson was born in the Wairarapa. His father was a contractor in this 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.

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) as his first partner. In 1946 Dawson entered semi-retirement, retiring in 1948. The firm he founded continues as King and Dawson.

Dawson designed a number of Wellington buildings, including:

- Columbia Hotel, Cuba Street (1908)
- 161-163 Cuba Street (1911)
- T.G. McCarthy Building, Willis Street (1913)
- Hatricks Motor Garage (now Manthel Motors), corner Taranaki and Wakefield Streets (1913)
- CMC Building, Courtenay Place (1920)
- Hope Gibbons Building, cnr Taranaki and Dixon Street (1925)
- James Smith's 1932 refurbishment and new façade

⁴ Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (block 4)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

⁵ *Evening Post*, Volume CVI, Issue 121, 1 December 1928, Page 16

⁶ *Evening Post*, Volume CVII, Issue 126, 1 June 1929, Page 4

⁷ Historic Places Trust, "Dawson, Joseph McClatchie.", *Professional Biographies*. Accessed 4 September 2012.

<http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Dawson,+Joseph+McClatchie>

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The building is transitional in character, finding a place between the ornate Edwardian Classical facades of much of the Cuba Street precinct, and Art Deco and Modernist design. The architectural style of the facade is Stripped Classical, retaining a minimal vocabulary of cornice, entablature and quasi-pilasters. Ornamental detail has been confined to small rosettes, roundels, and a moulded strip of half-chevronns at the lower end of the entablature. The facade is symmetrical, with well-detailed steel window mullions.⁸

A large portion of the façade is currently obscured behind a completely unsympathetic and inappropriate solid-walled balcony atop the verandah which strongly detracts from both the heritage values of the building and the overall streetscape of this block by blocking views of the façade and intruding in to the line of the street wall.⁹ Other modifications made over the years include the refurbishment of the ground floor shop fronts, and the replacement of the first floor windows.

2.2 Materials

The construction is steel frame, reinforced concrete walls on concrete foundations, and steel window joinery.¹⁰

2.3 Setting¹¹

This building sits among a row of masonry buildings of a variety of scales and architecture between Swan Lane and Vivian Street. It sits comfortably with the range of architectural styles on Cuba Street despite the ungainly solid balcony that has been constructed on the Cuba Street façade.

⁸ Wellington City Council, "173 Cuba Street", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 24.

⁹ Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Report*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Adapted from: Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Report*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

3.0 Sources

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

<http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Dawson,+Joseph+McClatchie>

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

Wellington City Council, "173 Cuba Street", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. Wellington City Council, 2001.

Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (block 4)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

WCC Records 1041-06-CUB171.

Newspapers

Evening Post, Volume CVI, Issue 68, 29 September 1928, Page 2

Evening Post, Volume CVI, Issue 121, 1 December 1928, Page 16

Evening Post, Volume CVII, Issue 126, 1 June 1929, Page 4

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?*

Behind the massive modern balcony of the Edilson Building is an elegantly composed Stripped Classical masonry building of two stories, accented with Art Deco-inspired details.

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, representing a transitional style, makes a distinct contribution to the Cuba Street precinct.

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?*

This building is part of an extended group of masonry buildings of a variety of scales and architecture south from Swan Lane which contribute positively to the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

Historic Value:

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

This building was designed by notable Wellington architect J.M. Dawson.

This building also has historic value for its long use as the City Rifle Range, and the long-standing home of the Wellington Fisherman's Co.

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

The building signals the shift from mixed use to the purely commercial in new building in Te Aro during the 1920s.

Scientific Value:

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

It is known that there has been pre-1900 human activity on the site; hence this site has potential archaeological value.

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 commercial buildings 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 the architecture and history found in Cuba Street.

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?*

Hidden behind the modern balcony, the first floor façade of the building remains largely intact with a high level of original detailing, despite the modifications to the first floor windows and ground floor retail space.

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-CUB171
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)		
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
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

Modern new shops – “splendid display windows and great depth, suitable any class of business”¹²

In 1929 – City Rifle Range *Evening Post*, Volume CVII, Issue 126, 1 June 1929, Page 4
<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19290601.2.11.7&srpos=4&e=-1928---1930--10--1----0%22rifle+range%22+cuba-->

Name “Johnson & Edilson”

The Johnson in the name 'Johnson & Edilson Building' may derive from the Arthur Johnson who surrendered a right of way to Edilson as part of the transfer in 1928. Right of way shown on CT191/244.¹³

A.L. Johnson and Edilson – built 66-72 Courtenay Place (Victory Buildings) in 1919. JM Dawson inspected the plans in 1928, presumably to make alterations, but there is no documentation of any work at that time exists.¹⁴

¹² *Evening Post*, Volume CVI, Issue 80, 13 October 1928, Page 2

¹³ Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (block 4)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

¹⁴ Wellington City Council, “66-72 Courtenay Place”, *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), COURT 16.