

Commercial Building

297-301 Cuba Street



301 Cuba Street



297 Cuba Street

Images: Charles Collins, 2014

Summary of heritage significance

- 297 – 301 Cuba Street is an Edwardian Classical commercial building with Mannerist influences. The building has two distinct two and three-storey Cuba Street facades that are well-articulated and decorated with Classical ornamentation. The facades are in near-complete condition and the survival of the original decorative parapet is a particularly note-worthy feature.
- The building has historic value for its association with the strong growth and development of Cuba Street during the Edwardian period, which resulted in the building of many fine commercial buildings. It is also associated with the development of the tram system and the growth that resulted in Cuba Street as a result of the expanded services.
- This building is sited in the Cuba Street Heritage Area and makes a positive contribution to the significant collection of heritage buildings that form the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

District Plan:	Map 16, reference 94/2
Legal Description:	Pt Sec 1 SO 35200
Heritage Area:	Cuba Street Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	Category II, reference 94/2
Archaeological Site:	NZAA Central City Archaeological Area R27/270
Other Names:	
Key physical dates:	Built: 1907
Architect / Builder:	Architect: possibly H.V.S Griffiths
Former uses:	Commercial
Current uses:	Commercial
Earthquake Prone Status:	Not Earthquake Prone – SR 188114

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

Although the two buildings that make up 297-301 Cuba Street appear to be two quite separate structures, they were designed and built at the same time in 1907, and the basic layout of two-storey 297 Cuba Street is essentially a repetition of taller, three-storey building at 301 Cuba Street.¹

The buildings appear to have been built in 1907 for 'house furnisher' John Morris (aka John Morris Schapiro²) by A. Cooper and Son, on land owned by Alexander Wilson. The plans could well have been prepared by H.V.S Griffiths who was, at that time, an architect or draughtsman in the civil service. The architect and Morris were named in a complex fraud case of 1908 against 'a young man' called Wallace Herbert Stewart who forged a receipt for payment of plans for a building on Cuba Street.³ Although this is not conclusive evidence that Griffiths designed these buildings, the dates, personal names, and street names all align.

The building was built in 1907 as part of a localised 'building-boom' that followed the extension of the tram network along Cuba Street to Newtown. It was probably built as an investment property, but this (or some other similar Cuba Street property) was later blamed for bankruptcy of Morris in 1908. A newspaper article of the time noted that

...at the time he took the property in Cuba Street he was doing well. The necessity of being compelled to build in brick – which he did not anticipate – made the undertaking much more difficult to manage. Prices were then rising and he had hoped to realise some advantage, having purchased the land at what he considered a cheap rate. Unfortunately things took a turn, and he was unable to let for some time.⁴

Following Morris's bankruptcy the building went through a series of owners and occupants. Number 297 has housed a dentist, a stationer, a lending library, and a confectioner. Number 301 included a pastry cooks, drycleaners, a chemist, and a dairy.

The facades of these buildings are largely unmodified, although the interiors have been relined and upgraded. Both buildings have also been seismically strengthened and now house commercial spaces on the ground floor and residences on the upper floors.

¹ Wellington City Council, "297-301 Cuba Street", *Wellington Built Heritage Inventory: Non Residential Precincts 2001*, (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 41.

² LAW REPORTS. *Dominion*, Volume 1, Issue 204, 22 May 1908, Page 4

<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=DOM19080522.2.24&srpos=127&e=-1900----100-DOM%2cEP-101-byDA---2john+morris-->

³ LAW REPORTS. *Dominion*, Volume 1, Issue 204, 22 May 1908, Page 4

⁴ 'Furniture Manufacturer's Bankruptcy', *Evening Post*, 2 March 1909, Page 8, accessed 25 July 2013, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=EP19090302.2.102>

1.2 Timeline of modifications



- 1907 297-301 Cuba Street, shops and dwellings (00053:140:7806)
- 1943 301 Cuba Street, reinstate earthquake damage (00056:283:B22710)
- 1978 301 Cuba Street, reinstate restaurant and art and culture centre (00058:1156:C49813)
- 1988 297-301 Cuba Street, verandah (00059:182:D8916)
- 1988 297-299 Cuba Street, office fit out (00059:231:D10665)
- 1999 297-299 Cuba Street, seismic strengthening, new deck and bathroom (00078:332:58717)
- 2000 301 Cuba Street, earthquake strengthening (00078:790:72297)
- 2000 301 Cuba Street, earthquake strengthening of existing building (00078:1727:71821)

1.3 Occupation history⁵

297: Mrs Katrina Hoskins, stationer (Stones 1915-16), Ellen & Maud Bauckham, confectioners (Stones 1920), Mrs May Hastings, confectioner (Stones 1925), Mrs Gwen Webb, confectioner (Stones 1930), not listed 1935 -c.1951 (may be conflated with 299), Lending Library (Wises 1955), Regent Bookshop (Wises 1961-62), Cambridge Printing Co (Wises 1975, 1980), Renta Picture (Wises 1985), Airdate Ltd (Wises 1990).

299: Edwin Walker, fruiterer (Stones 1915-16, 1920), Frederick McSweeney, pastry cook (Stones 1925), William Grantham, pastry cook (Stones 1930), George Harris, pastry cook (Stones 1935), Frederick Carter, pastry cook (Stones 1940), G.T. Harris, pastry cook (Stones 1945), Cuba Pastry cooks & Savouries (Wises 1950-51, 1955), Tesswell Studios, art goods (Wises 1961-62, 1967-68). Listed with 297 after this.

⁵ Ibid

301: Imperial Art Company (Stones 1915-16), Miss Caroline Phillips, confectioner (Stones 1920), Mrs M.J. Mills, confectioner (Stones 1925), William Sargent, dairy & confectioner (Stones 1930, 1935, 1940, 1945, Wises 1950-51), shop not listed 1955, 1961-62, Gilligan's Dairy (Wises 1967-68, 1971-72), Rawa House (Renaissance Artists & Writers) (Wises 1980), 301 Vegetarian Restaurant (Wises 1985), New Cuba Street Dairy (Wises 1985, 1990)

1.4 Architect

Unknown – possibly H.V.S Griffiths

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture⁶

297-301 Cuba Street is an Edwardian Classical commercial building that was influenced by a Mannerist-revival style. The building was built in 1907 with two distinct parts – a two-storey building with two shop/dwellings to the north, and a three-storey single shop/ dwelling to the south. The two facades are quite different in appearance (although they use the same architectural elements) but the two buildings do share the same basic layout, and 297 Cuba Street is essentially a repetition of 301 Cuba Street.

297 Cuba Street is two storeys high, symmetrical in composition, with square headed, double hung, windows. The most striking feature of the façade is the bold use of pediments, arched and triangular, over the windows. The parapet too, sports a central arched pediment, and the façade has a strongly moulded character. Three-storey 301 Cuba Street also uses pediments to impress a strong character on the façade. In this case, they are placed over each of the centre windows on both floors. The parapet too is capped with a central arched pediment. String courses between the first and second floors are aligned with horizontal elements in the neighbouring building – another indication that the buildings were designed at the same time.⁷

The building is particularly notable as a complete composition that has retained its original parapets and high-level ornamentation including window pediments. It stands in contrast to its neighbour the Thistle Hall (WCC 16/94.1) which lost its parapet in the aftermath of the 1942 Wellington /Wairarapa earthquake.

2.2 Materials

- Load bearing brick masonry
- Concrete foundations and piles
- Timber floors and joists

⁶ Wellington City Council, "297-301 Cuba Street", *Wellington Built Heritage Inventory: Non Residential Precincts 2001*, (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 41.

⁷ Wellington City Council, "297-301 Cuba Street", *Wellington Built Heritage Inventory: Non Residential Precincts 2001*, (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 41.

2.3 Setting

297-301 Cuba Street has two pleasant and symmetrical facades that contribute to the interesting variety of architecture in the Edwardian townscape of Upper Cuba Street. They maintain authenticity of design, materials, and craftsmanship. These buildings are quirky adaptations of the Classical style with Mannerist influences which provide interest in the streetscape of Cuba Street. They are a representative example of the style for the period. This building is sited in the Cuba Street Heritage Area and makes a positive contribution to the significant collection of heritage buildings that form the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

3.0 Sources

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

Wellington City Council. *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (blocks 6-7)*. Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006.

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

Papers Past

'Furniture Manufacturer's Bankruptcy', Evening Post, 2 March 1909, Page 8, accessed 25 July 2013, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=EP19090302.2.102>

Wellington City Archive

00053:140:7806
00056:283:B22710
00058:1156:C49813
00059:182:D8916
00059:231:D10665
00078:332:58717
00078:790:72297
00078:1727:71821

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?*

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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 scale, materials and style of this building contribute to the townscape of Cuba Street. It contributes visual interest to Cuba Street as an example of a highly ornamental architectural style.

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 is part of a group of heritage buildings that line both sides of Cuba Street at its southern extremity – between Arthur and Webb Streets. These buildings are one or two storeys high and were built in the early years of the 20th century.

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 building has historic value for its association with the strong growth and development of Cuba Street during the Edwardian period, which resulted in the building of many fine commercial buildings. It is also associated with the development of the tram system and the growth that resulted in Cuba Street as a result of the expanded services.

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. 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 is part of a group of Edwardian 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 on Cuba Street. It has a distinctive character and adds significantly to the variety of 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?*

The exterior of these buildings have had few alterations or modifications so retain significant amounts of original materials. The interiors have been relined and refurbished several times since their construction and have less integrity.

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 for its contribution to the Cuba Street Heritage Area. It retains economic and functional uses as well as retaining a significant amount of original material and authenticity.

4.0 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*