

House

66 Abel Smith Street



(Charles Collins – WCC, 2015)

Summary of heritage significance

- The house is a typical tall and narrow Victorian villa. It has aesthetic value for the design, proportions and ornamentation of the street façade.
- The building has had an uneventful history that is representative of many inner city residential properties.
- The building has some value for its contribution to the sense of place and continuity of Abel Smith Street, but this has been somewhat diminished by the redevelopment of the street as a commercial zone in recent years.

District Plan:	Map 16 Reference 2/2
Legal Description:	LOT 2 DP 6355
Heritage Area:	No
HPT Listed:	No
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	Unknown
Key physical dates:	1898
Architect / Builder:	Builder: W.R. Johnson
Former uses:	Residential
Current uses:	Residential
Earthquake Prone Status:	220797 Posted

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

This pair of houses at 66 and 68 Abel Smith Street appears to have experienced a fairly typical, if uneventful, history that is representative of many inner city houses. Captain Romerill had an interest in both properties at the end of the 19th century and his name appears on building permits for alterations to 68 Abel Smith Street in 1898 and as the property owner at 66 Abel Smith Street when it was built in the same year.¹

The two houses are on the same title and have been sold as a pair throughout their known history. They were sold at frequent intervals in the early 20th century and a typical owner was the optician Ernest Mark Sandstein who owned the houses from 1910 – 1915.²

The area around Cuba Street to the south of Vivian Street experienced a decline in fortunes in the mid-20thC, and parts of Cuba, Vivian and Ghuznee Streets became known as Wellington's 'Red Light District.' The most notable personality associated with the property during these years was Clare Hallam (1885-1976), a property owner and boarding-house keeper who made her name and fortune from her willingness to rent boarding house accommodation to homeless alcoholics and others who struggled to find long term housing. Hallam, who also hired rooms by the hour, was described by Canon Walter Arnold, the City Missioner as 'a very lovable rogue,' for her ability to combine business acumen with 'philanthropy of sorts'.³ One of the houses she owned on Abel Smith Street was raided by police in 1943 and found to be occupied by prostitutes and 'drunken servicemen'.⁴ Hallam sold the properties at 66 and 68 Abel Smith Street two years later, at the end of WWII.

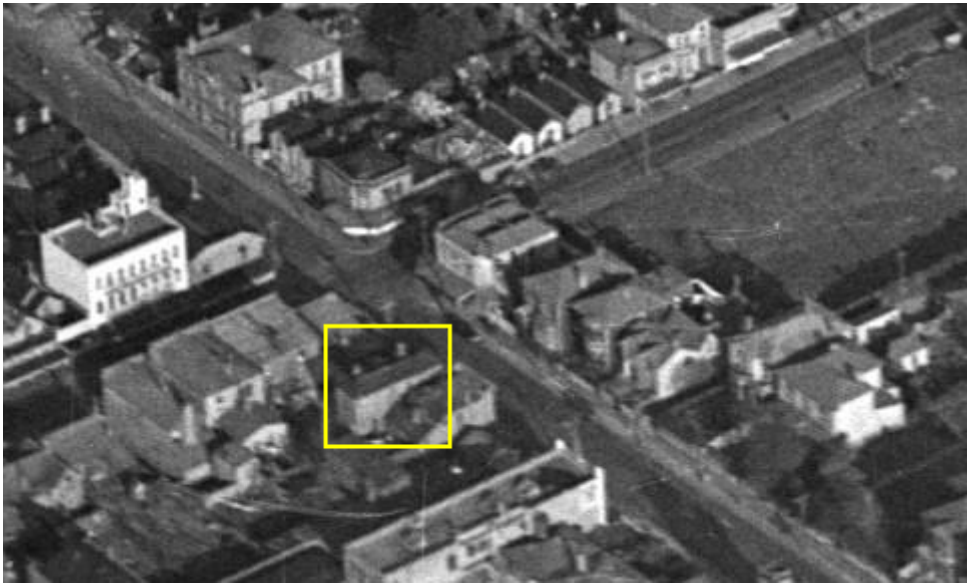
Although houses and cottages once predominated Abel Smith Street these two houses are the only ones, on this street block, to have survived redevelopment and to remain in residential use. The area around Cuba and Abel Smith Streets has since gentrified and its fortunes have improved with the completion of the inner-city bypass at nearby Karo Drive. The buildings that were once vacant, awaiting demolition or relocation to suit the new roading scheme, have since been demolished or moved. New businesses have opened in the refurbished buildings at Willis Street, Tonks Grove, Abel Smith Street and Cuba Street. The buildings at 66 and 68 Abel Smith Street now appear to be owned as investment properties and let for residential use.

¹ '66 Abel Smith Street, dwelling,' 26 February 1898, 00053:41:2649, Wellington City Archives; '68 Abel Smith Street, additions and alterations to shop and dwelling,' 25 January 1898, 00053:40:2585, Wellington City Archives; 'Obituary,' *Auckland Star*, Volume LII, Issue 114, 14 May 1921, Page 7.

² See: Cyclopedia Co. Ltd, 'Sandstein, Ernest Mark,' in *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand: Canterbury Provincial District* (Wellington: The Cyclopedia Company Limited, 1897), accessed 29 October 2012, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc03Cycl-t1-body1-d3-d54-d5.html> and *Dominion*, Volume 4, Issue 1049, 11 February 1911, Page 4.

³ Megan Hutching. 'Hallam, Clara Evelyn - Biography', from the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand, updated 1-Sep-10
URL: <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4h8/1>

⁴ *Evening Post*, Volume CXXXVI, Issue 58, 6 September 1943, Page 3.



An aerial view of Wellington, 1934. Negatives of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: 1/2-122291-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

1.2 Timeline of modifications

1898 Erect dwelling 00053:41:2649

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1.3 Architect

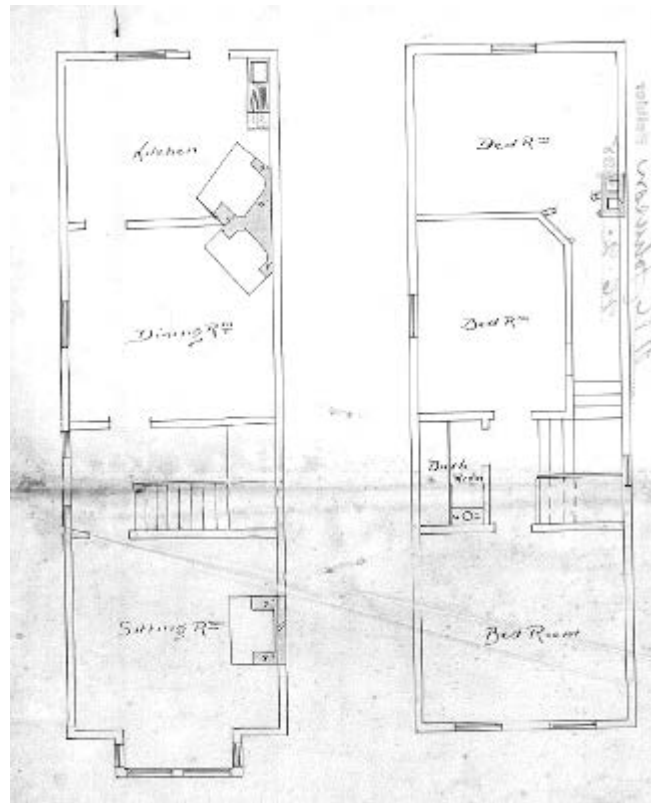
Architect: unknown

Builder: W. R. Johnson

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The building is a typical tall narrow two storey Victorian villa with a side entrance that is accessed via a narrow side alley. The street elevation features a rectangular bay window with sash windows at ground floor with a pair of linked sash windows above. The roof is 'supported' by eaves brackets and these repeat on the bay. There is an empty site the east of the building and the simple, unadorned, east elevation is visible from the street.



'66 Abel Smith Street, dwelling,' 26 February 1898,
00053:41:2649, Wellington City Archives.

2.2 Materials

- Timber structure
- Weatherboard cladding
- Timber sash windows
- Corrugated mild steel roof

2.3 Setting

The two buildings at 66 and 68 Abel Smith Street are located on a street block between Victoria Street and Cuba Street. On the eastern side of the pair of buildings is an open car park, separating them from a dry cleaner store (non-heritage) which marks the corner of Cuba Street and Abel Smith Street. To the west is a non-descript two storey commercial building, and the nearest heritage building of note is the former Wellington Education Board Building (1939) immediately opposite at 65-69 Abel Smith Street.

The two remaining timber houses in this street block of Abel Smith Street can be seen as a reminder of the residential use of upper Cuba Street in the early 20th century. It is unfortunate that the poor quality of their surrounding buildings, landscape and streetscape detracts from the aesthetic value of these buildings.

3.0 Sources

Cyclopedia Co. Ltd. 'Sandstein, Ernest Mark.' In *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand: Canterbury Provincial District*. Wellington: The Cyclopedia Company Limited, 1897. Accessed 29 October 2012, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc03Cycl-t1-body1-d3-d54-d5.html>.

Hutching, Megan. 'Hallam, Clara Evelyn – Biography.' From the Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Te Ara - the Encyclopedia of New Zealand. Updated 1-Sep-10. Accessed 29 October 2012. <http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/biographies/4h8/1>.

Newspapers

'Obituary.' *Auckland Star*. Volume LII, Issue 114. 14 May 1921. Page 7.

Dominion. Volume 4, Issue 1049. 11 February 1911. Page 4.

Evening Post. Volume CXXXVI, Issue 58. 6 September 1943. Page 3.

Wellington City Archives

'66 Abel Smith Street, dwelling.' 26 February 1898. 00053:41:2649.

'68 Abel Smith Street, additions and alterations to shop and dwelling.' 25 January 1898. 00053:40:2585.

'68 Abel Smith Street, reinstatement.' 21 September 1956. 00056:547:B40287.

4.0 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?

The house is a typical tall and narrow Victorian villa. It has aesthetic value for the design, proportions and ornamentation of the street façade.

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?

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?

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

The building has had an uneventful history that is representative of many inner city residential properties.

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. Pre 1900 building.

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 building has some value for its contribution to the sense of place and continuity of Abel Smith Street, but this has been somewhat diminished by the redevelopment of the street as a commercial zone in recent years.

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 building has retained a significant amount of original exterior fabric and therefore has authenticity.

Local/Regional/National/International

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

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

SCHEDULE. — D. O. W.

"ONE OF THE WORST"**POLICE RAID ON HOUSE**

"The place is well known as a brothel, one of the worst in the town," said Senior-Sergeant G. J. Paine in the Magistrate's Court today concerning a house in Abel Smith Street, when William Richard Bavister, 47, seaman and kitchenman, was charged with managing the place as a house of ill fame. Bavister pleaded guilty to the charge, had nothing to say, and was sentenced by Mr. J. L. Stout, S.M., to three months' imprisonment with hard labour.

The senior-sergeant said that for the past five months Bavister had been residing in the house, which was owned by a Mrs. Hallam, and for the last ten weeks he had been acting as manager, living in the house and collecting money from servicemen who wanted the use of a room for a night. He had been warned by the police that it was a house of ill fame.

Last night, continued the senior-sergeant, the place was raided by the police. There were four bedrooms upstairs and four downstairs, and they were occupied by servicemen and women.

Lucca McGoan, 36, domestic, and May McKay, 23, waitress, pleaded guilty to being in the house for the purpose of prostitution, and they were remanded until Wednesday for sentence.

Senior-Sergeant Paine said that they were in bed with drunken servicemen. The room was filthy and there were partly-consumed bottles of wine there. McGoan was a married woman and had recently arrived from Auckland. McKay had arrived in Wellington at the end of last month, since when she had been living with a Chinese and had been known to use the particular rooms for the purpose of prostitution.

McGoan said she did not know what kind of house it was. It was the first time she had been there. She had seven children and she had just received a telegram to go back to Auckland.

Marie Abraham, 26, waitress, and Mavis Pearl Moore, 21, housemaid, pleaded not guilty to being in the house for the purpose of prostitution, and were remanded until next Monday.

Clara Hallam, 58, apartment house keeper, pleaded not guilty to a charge of permitting the house in Abel Smith Street to be used as a house of ill fame, and on the application of Mr. A. L. Hollings she was remanded for a week.

Evening Post, Volume CXXXVI, Issue 58, 6
September 1943, Page 3.