

House

128 Abel Smith Street



Charles Collins –2015

Summary of heritage significance

- 128 Abel Smith Street is an interesting element of the southern part of the city. Designed in the Edwardian Free style, with influences from Queen Anne and Italianate, this house is a good example of an inner city dwelling that has been adapted to a number of different uses since its construction.
- The dwelling at 128 has had a varied and interesting history since its construction in the 19th century that exalts it above the typical history experienced by other inner city houses. It has been adapted from dwelling to private hospital to a society headquarters and is now a community centre and hotspot of political activism.
- This house is representative of a large dwelling that has been adapted several times to meet changing needs. It is a good example of the Edwardian Free style and is an important element in the landscape of the southern part of the city. It was also constructed in materials and using methods common to the period of its construction.

District Plan:	Map 16, reference 4
Legal Description:	Lot 2 DP 626
Heritage Area:	-
HPT Listed:	-
Archaeological Site:	Pre 1900 Building, NZAA Central City Archaeology Area R27/270
Other Names:	-
Key physical dates:	Built: 1898
Architect / Builder:	
Former uses:	Residential
Current uses:	Residential, community group meeting place
Earthquake Prone Status:	EQ Not Necessary, Outside EQ Policy – SR 269338

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

The dwelling at 128 has had a varied and interesting history since its construction in the 19th century that raises it above the typical history experienced by other inner city houses.

The site of the house was occupied by a dwelling prior to 1898, as plans submitted state that the timber house (partially making up that which is seen now) was to be an addition to an existing brick building. The owner of the house was a Miss Rowden, and the applicant for the works was D. Ritchie. There has been some suggestion that the addition was designed by William Crichton prior to the establishment of Crichton and McKay, but the architects names are not on the plans or permit lists for the property so this cannot be verified. The addition created a drawing and dining room, hall way, a scullery and pantry and an extension to the kitchen on the ground floor, and three bedrooms, a bathroom, W.C, and linen storage on the first floor.¹

By 1910 the house had changed ownership and was owned by Misses A. and C. Murphy who were running a private hospital from the building. The house was known as the Waimarie Private Hospital and more colloquially 'Nurse Murphy's'.² The women made some further additions to the house in 1913, adding a dormer window and some unspecified additions to the dwelling. In both cases the applicant was M.D. Menelaus. In 1917 Misses A. and C. Murphy added the covered balcony and verandah to the house. In this case the applicant was R.W. Smith and the value was £300.

The house continued to be run as a private hospital following a change of ownership around 1922 following the death of Clare Murphy.³ The house appears to have been purchased by a Miss Fisher and Miss Jefferies. In 1922 a garage was constructed on the site and the following year they had some additions constructed.

It appears that the house was in the ownership of a Mr C.A. Thompson by 1929 and being managed as a private hospital by Catherine Williams.⁴

By 1946 the house had again changed hands and over the next ten years had four owners before being purchased in 1957 by the Lebanese Society of New Zealand (Incorporated).⁵ The house was used by the society as a social venue, but over the years the group became increasingly inactive, and the house was rented out. The house began to fall into disrepair and finding tenants became increasingly difficult making it appealing to looters and squatters, and the threat that the house would be demolished to make way for the inner city bypass did little to help the situation.

¹ WCA 00053: 43: 2731

² WCA 00053:195: 10752; 'Births', *Evening Post* 5 February 1910, page 4, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=DOM19100205.2.7.1&srpos=15&e=-----10--11----0128+Abel+Smith+Street-->

³ 'Deaths', *Evening Post*, 8 December 1922, Page 1, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19221208.2.3&srpos=3&e=---10--1----0108+Abel+Smith+Street-->

⁴ 'Damage by fire', *Evening Post*, 22 January 1929, Page 11, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19290122.2.113&srpos=27&e=-----10--21----0128+Abel+Smith+Street-->

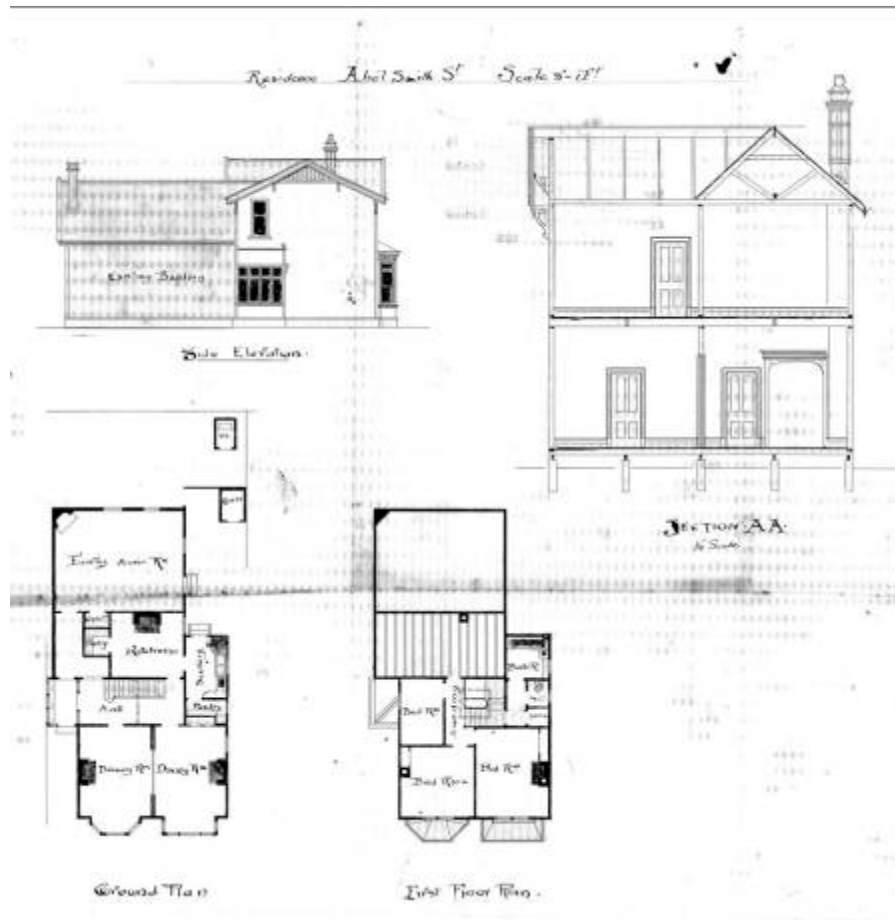
⁵ WN 515/55

Te Aro locals, many of whom were local activists, volunteered to restore the house in order to use it as a community centre. The running of the house is maintained by official caretakers who may live in the building for up to two years as well as volunteers. In 2007 the house was raided by police as part of Operation Eight, a series of armed police arrests carried out on the 15 October 2007 in response to alleged paramilitary training camps in the Urewera mountain range. Since that time the volunteers in the house have offered support to those affected by the raids, including members of the Tuhoe tribe, and in the past five years have become more closely associated with political activism. The house has become known as 'the anarchist house' and is associated with a number of political and community protests and activities, as well as hosting community groups and offering a range of volunteer run services such as an anarchist library, the Mechanical Tempest bicycle workshop, the marginalised genders room, an office, and a seed bank. The house is also used as a hostel. There are occasional events held such as stencilling lessons, screen printing workshops, and the Rusty Tongue performance café.⁶

This house has become extremely well known due to its association with political and community groups, as well as for the volunteer run services and workshops that it provides. It is a local landmark that is an individual response to inner city residential requirements, the requirements of a private hospital, and now a community centre. The house also stands out in the street and is highly visible from the urban motorway and Karo Drive. It presents some of the history of Te Aro that was lost in the development of the motorway and retains authenticity of materials, craft, and to some extent setting.

⁶ Sarah Dunn, 'We go inside to find out what happens in 'anarchist house'', Newswire, Whitireia New Zealand, May 19th 2001, accessed 2 October 2013, <http://www.newswire.co.nz/2011/05/inside-theanarchist-house-at-128-abel-smith-st/>

1.2 Timeline of modifications (original plans cannot be accessed – 1898 plan)



- 1898 128 Abel Smith Street, dwelling additions (00053:43:2731)
- 1913 148a Abel Smith Street [128 Abel Smith Street], additions to dwelling (00053:173:9570)
- 1913 128 Abel Smith Street, dormer window (00053:173:9529)
- 1917 Abel Smith Street [128 Abel Smith Street], alterations to dwelling (00053:190:10452)
- 1918 128 Abel Smith Street, additions and alterations to Waimarie Private Hospital (00053:195:10752)
- 1922 128 Abel Smith Street, garage (00055:6:A568)
- 1923 128 Abel Smith Street, additions (00055:11:A1101)
- 1960 128 Abel Smith Street, dwelling alterations (00058:147:C6943)

1.3 Occupation history

Not assessed

1.4 Architect

Unknown architect

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The house has been built in the Edwardian Free Style, with some elements of Queen Anne in the design of the gable decorations and bay window, while the roof and building form suggest an Italianate influence.

The building's decoration is limited to plain infilling of timber with little modelling, and arches which create an interesting effect of light and shade on the nearly flat elevations.

2.2 Materials

- Rusticated weatherboard
- Painted timber joinery
- Corrugated iron roofing

2.3 Setting

This house is situated in an area that was less affected by the development of the urban motorway than nearby Tonks avenue and Cuba Street. There are a number of similar timber buildings dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries that together create an area of quality historic dwellings. The landscape, streetscape, and surrounding buildings do not detract from the aesthetic values of 128 Abel Smith Street, and it has become a highly visible landmark building that can be seen easily from the urban motorway and Karo Drive.

Sources

Dunn, Sarah. 'We go inside to find out what happens in 'anarchist house'', Newswire, Whitireia New Zealand, May 19th 2001, accessed 2 October 2013, <http://www.newswire.co.nz/2011/05/inside-theanarchist-house-at-128-abel-smith-st/>

Papers Past

'Damage by fire'. *Evening Post*, 22 January 1929, Page 11, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgibin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=EP19290122.2.113&srpos=27&e=-----10--21----0128+Abel+Smith+Street-->

'Births'. *Evening Post* 5 February 1910, page 4, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgibin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=DOM19100205.2.7.1&srpos=15&e=-----10--11----0128+Abel+Smith+Street-->

Land Information New Zealand

WN 513/55

Wellington City Archive

- 1898 128 Abel Smith Street, dwelling additions (00053:43:2731)
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3.0 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?*

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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?*

This house is a landmark building on Abel Smith Street and is highly visible from the urban motorway and Karo Drive. It contributes visual amenity to the area and plays an important role in defining Abel Smith Street.

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?*

The dwelling at 128 has had a varied and interesting history since its construction in the 19th century that elevates it above the typical history experienced by other inner city houses. It has been adapted from dwelling to private hospital to a society headquarters and is now a community centre and hotspot of political activism.

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?*

This house is pre 1900 and is situated 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?*

This house is held in very high public esteem and has become extremely well known due to its association with political and community groups, as well as for the volunteer run services and workshops that it provides.

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?

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?*

This house is representative of a large dwelling that has been adapted several times to meet changing needs. It is a good example of the Edwardian Free style and is an important element in the landscape of the southern part of the city. It was also constructed in materials and using methods common to the period of its construction.

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?*

This house has had few major modifications since the early 20th century, and retains authenticity of craft, materials, and setting.

Local/Regional/National/International

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

This house is locally significant for its architecture, the contribution it makes to the streetscape, its archaeological value, as a representative of the time of its construction, and for its authenticity. Its history has some national significance due to its associations with political activism and the 2007 'Operation Eight' raids.

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*