

Dr Henry Pollen House

122 Willis Street



Image: *Charles Collins, 2015*

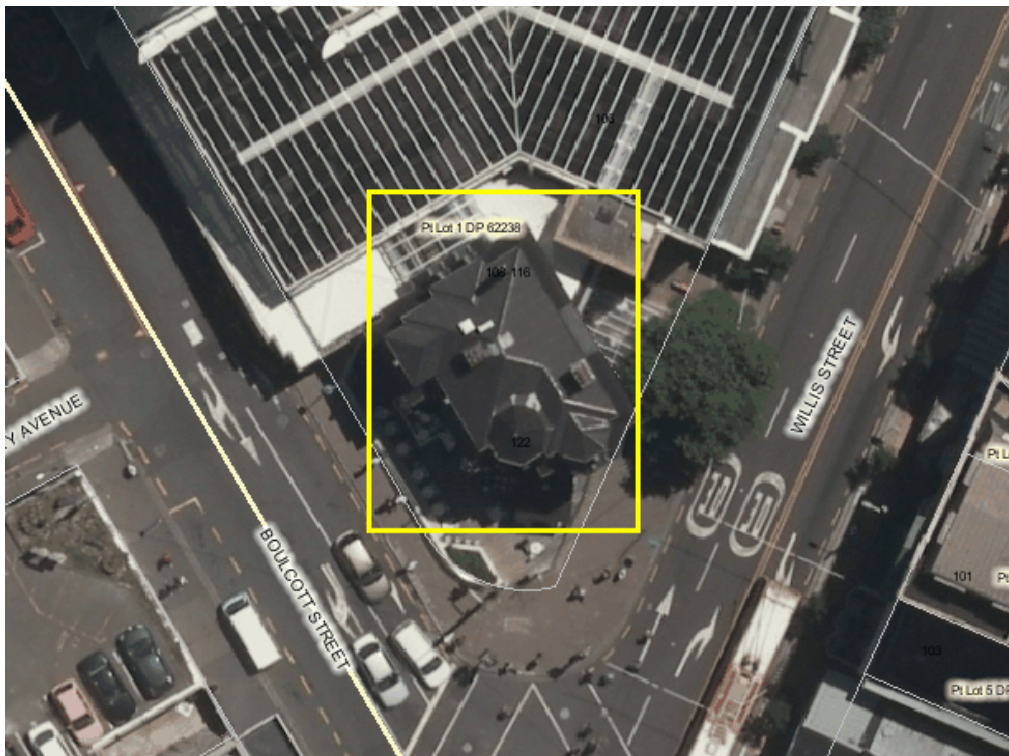
Summary of heritage significance

- The former Dr Henry Pollen House is a fine example of a French Second Empire-style house that was designed by prominent local architect, Thomas Turnbull. It is notable for the quality of its design, materials and workmanship and for its vigour, originality, complex form and extravagant detailing.
- Dr Henry Pollen's house is historically significant as the residence and surgery for the prominent Wellington medical practitioner, Dr Henry Pollen. He held many medical posts in the capital over the years and died in the house in 1918. Since Pollen's death the house has had a variety of uses, as a private residence, massage parlour, wine bar and, most recently, a restaurant.

- The intersection of Willis, Manners and Boulcott Streets is a key nodal junction on Wellington city's Golden Mile. Dr Henry Pollen's house has been a distinctive element in the townscape ever since its relocation in 1988.

District Plan:	Map 17 reference 31
Legal Description:	Pt Lot 1 DP 62238
Heritage Area:	No
HPT Listed:	Category I – Reference 1420
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	The General Practitioner 12 Boulcott Street 88-122 Willis Street
Key physical dates:	1902 1988 relocated and refurbished (extensively)
Architect / Builder:	Architect: Thomas Turnbull Builder: J. Carmichael
Former uses:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Surgery• Massage parlour• Restaurant
Current uses:	Bar
Earthquake Prone Status:	SR 262266 – Sent to engineer

CityView 2012



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

This three storey timber house was built for Dr Henry Pollen in 1902 as a residence and surgery. Pollen (1853-1918) was born in Dublin and studied medicine at Trinity College, qualifying in 1875. The following year he accepted the position of Surgeon Superintendent to the New Zealand Government Emigration Department, settling in Gisborne and practising medicine there until 1890. He held many posts, some honorary, and was a professional man of note in Wellington.¹ He acted as a medical referee for several friendly societies and for the New Zealand Government Life Insurance Department. He was Port Health Officer in Wellington for a number of years and a member of the Military Pensions Board.

The house was designed by prominent Wellington architect, Thomas Turnbull, in a French Second Empire style of great originality. The builder was J. Carmichael, and the original site was a small triangle of land further up Boulcott Street. Pollen died in the house in 1918 and the building has had mixed fortunes since, being sold first to a Wellington surgeon, Eric Lachlan Marchant, and in 1929 to Alfred de Barthe Brandon.

It has had a variety of other uses including a restaurant and a massage parlour. The house was bought by a property developer in 1972. Principal shareholder, architect Ian Athfield, began restoration work which was completed in 1975. In 1988 it was relocated by crane to the corner of Willis and Boulcott Streets as part of the Majestic Tower development and was restored in 1990. Works included the construction of new concrete foundations; a new corrugated mild steel roof; and the removal of all elements of brickwork including chimneys. External decorative elements were repaired, and missing elements such as the entrance portico, a rooftop dormer and part of a missing mansard were reinstated. The original brick chimneys were replaced with lightweight replicas, and the original clay chimney pots have generally been retained.

The building is currently in use as a popular bar/restaurant.²

¹ New Zealand Historic Places Trust, 'Buildings Classification Committee Report,' p.3.

² History taken from: Wellington City Council, '12 Boulcott Street,' *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings* (Wellington City Council, 2001), BOUL1.



Dr Henry Pollen House in its original location, 1955. Negatives of the Evening Post newspaper. Ref: EP/1955/1498-F. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.

1.2 Timeline of modifications

1902	Residence and surgery	00053:80:4673
1907	Alterations	00053:142:7904
1935	Additions to dwelling	00056:154:B13765
1975	Upgrade building	00058:984:C43094
1977	Convert to restaurant	00058:1082:C46878
1979	Upgrade for fire and egresses	00058:1216:C52098
1990	Restoration: Works included the installation of new reinforced concrete foundations; installation of a new corrugated mild steel roof; addition/adaptation of internal stairs; removal of all brick hearths and chimneys; addition of lightweight replica chimneys (original chimney pots retained); addition of original and recycled internal fire surrounds; new replica entrance porch & verandah; a new dormer added; some external decorative timber work at high level added to match original; some internal decorative timber elements were added.	00059:391:E20387

1.3 Occupation history

1902	Henry Pollen
1919	Eric Lachlan Marchant
1967	Restaurant
1995	Aqua Viate Wine Bar
c.2012	The General Practitioner

1.4 Architect

William Turnbull (1868-1941) entered the architectural office of his father Thomas (1825-1907) in 1882, and received a professional education from him. In 1890, William visited Melbourne and Sydney and was engaged in the office of J A Gordon, a Melbourne architect who at that time was engaged in the design of several major commercial buildings including the Melbourne (now Victoria) Markets. In 1891 William returned to Wellington and was admitted into partnership in the firm of Thomas Turnbull and Son. This was one of the foremost architectural practices in the city at the turn of the century and it continued after Thomas Turnbull's death in 1907. William became a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects in 1906, designing many important early twentieth century buildings in Wellington such as 12 Boulcott Street (1902), Turnbull House (1918), and the Wellington Free Ambulance Building (1932). The range and variety of his adaptation of architectural styles show him to be fully versed in virtually every contemporary architectural style and to have special skills and flair for masonry design.³

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

Dr Henry Pollen House was designed by prominent Wellington architect, Thomas Turnbull, in a French Second Empire style which includes French Renaissance and Post-Renaissance decorative motifs, as well as elements of High Victorian Gothic. The building has no real equivalent in the Capital and the overall design is exceptional in its originality.⁴ The house is three stories high, with double-bay windows carried through two floors. The windows themselves are round headed, with heavy architraves and segmented hood moulds. String courses, panel moulding, and strongly projecting eaves tie the composition together and demarcate interior floor levels on the exterior facade. The Mansard roof, with a projecting turret, is another outstanding feature of the building, along with balconies on two levels.

The building makes a notably original contribution to the Willis Street and Boulcott Street townscape because of its exuberant architecture. Stylistic links to Antrim House (1905) at 63 Boulcott Street are clear. Both were designed by Thomas Turnbull in the grand manner, employing French Renaissance motifs, turrets and Mansard roofs, and the imitation of stone elements in timber.⁵

Some internal walls have been removed or relocated on the ground and first floors, but important spaces such as the dining room and best bedroom maintain much of their original integrity. On the second floor there have been substantial alterations.⁶ Because of this it is difficult to identify original rooms and purposes.⁷

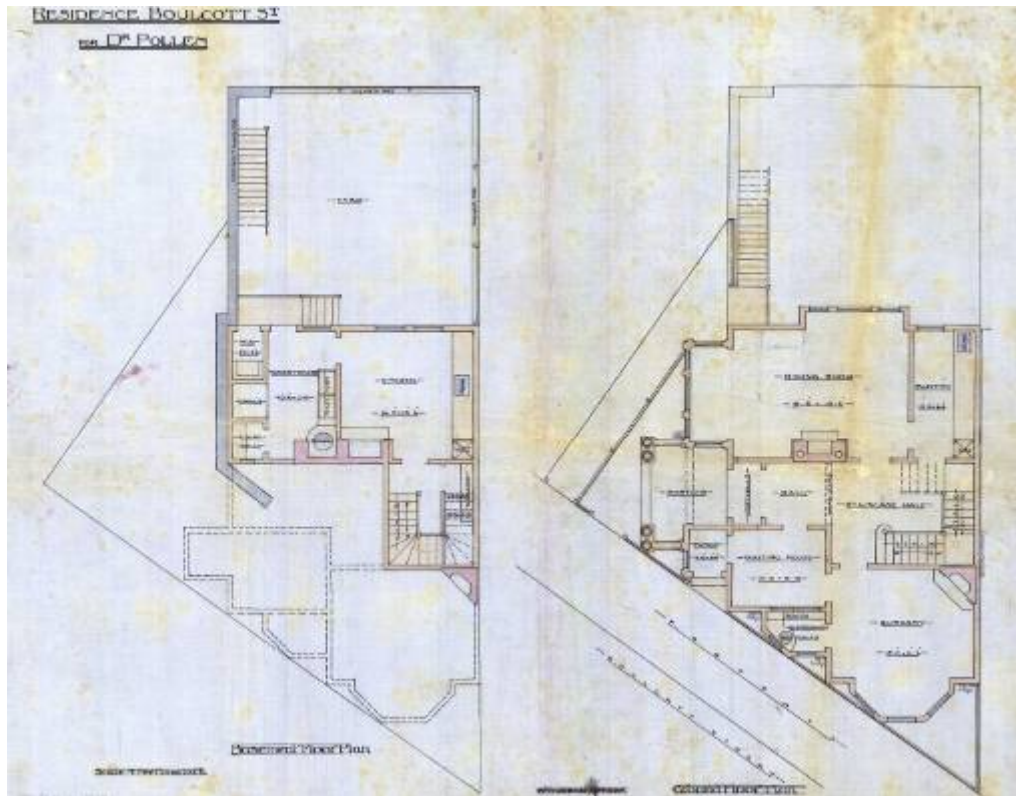
³ New Zealand Historic Places Trust Professional Biographies 'Thomas Turnbull,' accessed 15 October 2012, [http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Turnbull,+William+\(1868-1941\)](http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Turnbull,+William+(1868-1941)).

⁴ New Zealand Historic Places Trust, 'Buildings Classification Committee Report,' p.3.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ New Zealand Historic Places Trust, 'Buildings Classification Committee Report,' p.4.

⁷ Architecture taken from: Wellington City Council, '12 Boulcott Street,' *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings* (Wellington City Council, 2001), BOUL1.



'12 Boulcott Street, residence and surgery,' 05 February 1902, 00053:80:4673, Wellington City Archives.

2.2 Materials

- Modern 'reinforced concrete masonry' foundation walls (1990)
- Timber framing with rusticated timber weatherboards
- Timber sash windows
- Corrugated mild steel roof (1990)

2.3 Setting

Prior to its relocation in 1988 the building was originally located further up Boulcott Street, opposite St Mary of the Angels. Today the building is situated on the corner of Boulcott Street and Willis Street. It overlooks the intersection that is created by the meeting of these streets with the western end of Manners Street. To both the west and the north of the building is the Majestic Centre, with the Majestic Tower rising above. Across from the building, on the southern side of Boulcott Street is the Hotel St George (1929). Further along this side of Boulcott Street stands St Mary of the Angels (1922). Across from it, on the other side of Willis Street stands the Jaycee Building (1920).

3.0 Sources

New Zealand Historic Places Trust. 'Buildings Classification Committee Report.'

New Zealand Historic Places Trust Professional Biographies. 'Thomas Turnbull.'
Accessed 15 October 2012.

[http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Turnbull,+William+\(1868-1941\)](http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Turnbull,+William+(1868-1941)).

Wellington City Council. '12 Boulcott Street.' *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. Wellington City Council, 2001. BOUL1.

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 former Dr Henry Pollen House is a fine example of a French Second Empire-style house that was designed by prominent local architect, Thomas Turnbull. It is notable for the quality of its design, materials and workmanship and for its vigour, originality, complex form and extravagant detailing.

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 intersection of Willis, Manners and Boulcott Streets is a key nodal junction on Wellington city's Golden Mile. Dr Henry Pollen's house has been a distinctive element in the townscape ever since its relocation in 1988.

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 has some group value when considered in relation to the other house/surgeries that once lined upper Willis Street, particularly Dr McGavin's house at 200 Willis Street by William Turnbull, Dr Ewart's House at 279 Willis Street, Dr Levy's maternity hospital at 278 Willis Street (now relocated), and Dr Alexander Wilson Hogg's house at 319 Willis Street (also relocated).

Historic Value:

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

Dr Henry Pollen's house is historically significant as the residence and surgery for the prominent Wellington medical practitioner, Dr Henry Pollen. He held many medical posts in the capital over the years and died in the house in 1918. Since Pollen's death the house has had a variety of uses, as a private residence, massage parlour, wine bar and, most recently, a restaurant.

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

The building is associated with the construction of doctors' residences at the upper end of Willis Street (such as Dr. McGavin's surgery at 200 Willis Street) which took place during the first quarter of the early twentieth century.

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?*

The building is 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?*

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?*

The building is architecturally rare for Wellington.

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?*

Despite its relocation in 1988 the building's exterior has retained a significant amount of original fabric therefore it has authenticity.

Local/Regional/National/International

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

Because the architectural style of the building is rare for Wellington and due to its historical association with the practice of medicine in early twentieth century Wellington, the building is important on a local level.

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	
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	Y	
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)		

Background research