

Kennedy Building

33-39 Cuba Street



Photo: *Charles Collins, 2015*

Summary of heritage significance

- The Kennedy Building is a four storey Edwardian Commercial building and the façade is a particularly good example of an Edwardian commercial façade designed in a simple Classical style.
- The building is one four key prominent Edwardian buildings in Block 1 of the Cuba Street Heritage Area and makes a strong positive contribution to the Cuba Street Heritage Area.
- This building has close associations with an early Wellington family, the Kennedys. The initials of the two sisters, for whom the building was designed and built, remain on the parapet.
- The building façade has remained (relatively) unchanged on the site for over 100 years and contributes to the sense of place and continuity of the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

District Plan: Map 17, Symbol 71
Legal Description: Lots 7 & 8 DP 845
Heritage Area: Cuba Street Heritage Area
HPT Listed: Category II reference 5377
Archaeological Site: Pre-1900 human activity on the site.
Other Names:
Key physical dates: Built 1905
Architect / Builder: James O'Dea
Former uses: Commercial
Current uses: Commercial
Earthquake Prone Status: 124 Served (SR160477)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

Still known as 'The Kennedy's Building', this structure has a strong association with the Kennedy family. Martin Kennedy was a Wellington merchant as well as a pioneer of the mining industry on the West Coast, Catholic layman, good friend of Mother Aubert and for many years a director of the Bank of New Zealand.¹ In 1903 his daughters, spinster sisters Agnes Ann and Anastasia Christina Kennedy, purchased the two adjacent lots from brothers James and Anthony Fry.² The family commissioned Wellington architect James O'Dea to design the Edwardian commercial building in 1905.³ It was built by contractors, Campbell and Burke.⁴ The initials of Agnes and Anastasia Kennedy are inscribed on the top of the building on either side of the 'Kennedy Building' signage.⁵

At the time, the electric tramway was newly installed and Cuba Street was becoming a bustling commercial precinct.⁶ The finest buildings in Cuba Street were built in this period and this is typical of the buildings constructed in the Edwardian years for Cuba Street.

In 1934 a verandah was added, constructed to a design by architects Crichton McKay & Haughton.⁷ This modification was probably a precautionary measure in the wake of the 1931 Hawkes Bay Earthquake. The parapet was subsequently rebuilt after the 1942 Wellington/Wairarapa Earthquake.

The building remained in the ownership of the Kennedy family until 1936, when it was purchased by local businessman William Kelly.⁸

The building was comprised of four shops. The longest tenant was glass and wallpaper merchants Smith and Smith Glass, who purchased and occupied the building from 1943 to 1986.⁹ The building was popular with small businesses selling material and building supplies. Tenants included glass, cerrara and electrical suppliers. Other more unusual tenants included the Turkish Bathhouse and Dr. Williams' Medical Company – who sold 'Pink Pills for White People'.¹⁰

In 1992 Mibar Enterprises Ltd purchased the property and carried out a structural upgrade.¹¹ It remains in their ownership today.

¹ Hugh Laracy. 'Kennedy, Martin - 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/3k9/1>

² CT 120/238 and CT 120/237

³ Wellington City Council, "Kennedy Building", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA1.

⁴ WCC Archives File: 00053:119:6569

⁵ Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (blocks 1-3)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

⁶ Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Report*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006), p.15.

⁷ WCC Archives File: 00056:146:B13189

⁸ Certificates of Title 120/37 & 120/38

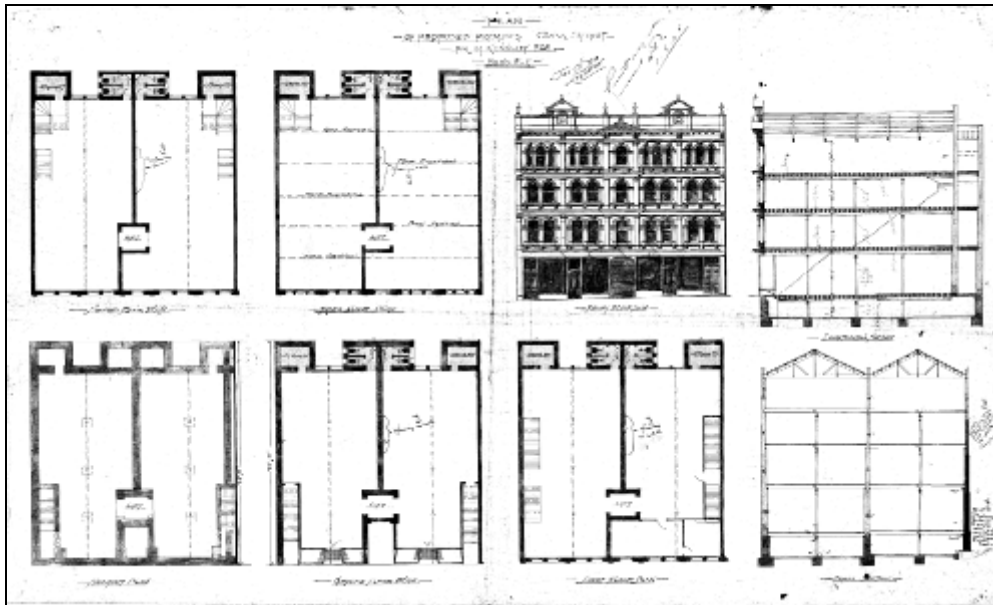
⁹ CT120/237

¹⁰ Daily Telegraph, Issue 9259, 3 September 1898, Page 2

¹¹ CT 120/237



Enlargement of the front elevation
(00053:119:6569)



Original plans, sections and street elevations
(00053:119:6569)

1.2 Timeline of modifications

- 1905 Construction of the Kennedy Building. (00053:119:6569)
- 1923 Addition to premises, verandah, tiles and mirror fixed to exterior.¹²
- 1929 New shop front¹³
- 1931 Existing parapet removed and concrete band constructed as a precaution after the 1931 Hawkes Bay Earthquake.¹⁴
- 1934 An existing verandah was removed and a new awning was added to the building to a design by Architect Crichton McKay & Haughton. (00056:146:B13189)
- 1942 Parapet reinstated after the 1942 Wellington/Wairarapa Earthquake.¹⁵
- 1946 Window replaced with set of doors¹⁶
- 1950 Shop front modification: plate glass window installed. (00056:385:B29681)
- 1957 Building alterations to basement and ground floor, caretakers flat (00058:29:C1519)
- 1993 Structural upgrade (00059: 607: E27035)
- 2001 Structurally strengthened.¹⁷
- 2004 A resource consent was made for alterations to the building. A site visit is required to confirm if these alterations were actually made.¹⁸

1.3 Occupation history

33: Schaefer & Co, importers (Stones1910-11, 1915-16), Carrara Ceiling Co (Stones1910-11). Smith & Smith Glass (Wises1955, 1955, 1961-62, 1967-68, 1971-72, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990).

35: Alcock & Co, billiard table manufacturers (Stones1910-11), Turkish Baths (Stones 1935, 1940), Lamphouse Audio Ltd (Wises1961-62, 1967-68, 1971-72, 1975, 1980)

37: Smith & Co, electrical engineers & contractors (Stones1910-11, 1915-16, 1920), Electrical Supplies Ltd (Stones1925, 1930, 1935), Paul Ketko, real estate firm (Stones1945, Wises1950-51)

39: Dr. Williams' Medicine Company (Stones1910-11, 1915-16, 1920, 1925), Thyne & Co, stationers & bookbinders (Stones1920, 1925, 1930, 1935, 1940, 1945, Wises1950-51). Chappell & Co, music publishers (Wises1955, 1961-62).¹⁹

2004 – The ground floor used as a retail space, upper floors unoccupied.²⁰

¹² Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (blocks 1-3)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

¹³ Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (blocks 1-3)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

¹⁴ Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (blocks 1-3)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

¹⁵ Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (blocks 1-3)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

¹⁶ Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (blocks 1-3)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

¹⁷ WCC Records 1041-06-CUB33

¹⁸ WCC Records 1041-06-CUB33

¹⁹ Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (blocks 1-3)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

²⁰ WCC Records 1041-06-CUB33

1.4 Architect

James O’Dea was a Wellington architect who established his practice in 1882.²¹ More research is required to establish the history and significance of the work of James O’Dea, but it is known that he designed several significant buildings including:

- 1899: Tramway Hotel, 114-116 Adelaide Rd, 6 / 397
- 175 - 179 Cuba Street (NZHPT Cat II)
- 1904: 203 Cuba Street (People’s Palace) (NZHPT Cat II)

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The Kennedy Building is a four storey Edwardian Commercial building with a basement. The façade is a particularly good example of an Edwardian commercial façade designed in a simple Classical style. The building stands a very tall four stories high (nearly equal to the six floors of the Civic Chambers) and is notable for its symmetrical and strongly modelled street façade, characterised by the very deeply set windows (segmental at the first floor and arched at the other floors), all embellished with pilasters, architraves and keystones, the very prominent cornices at each floor level finished with large blocks above corbels. The carefully judged neo-Classical composition of the elements which diminish in scale at the top floor helps create a sense that the building is even taller than it is.²²

The original façade has survived largely intact with changes only to the parapet which was removed and simplified in 1931 (perhaps as a direct response to the Hawkes Bay Earthquake of that year). The parapet was altered again in 1942, probably in the wake of the 1942 Wellington / Wairarapa earthquake. Other external modifications include the construction of a new verandah in 1934 and various modifications to the window and door joinery / fenestration.

The main rhythm of the building is set by the six pilasters of each floor, doubling-up over the centre of the building. This central element is capped by a triangular pediment at upper cornice level. There is a pronounced cornice between floors, and the upper cornice is decorated by brackets and consoles. The building carries a hierarchy of windows that give variation and interest to the facade. On the first storey, the windows are paired and segmentally-arched, each with a prominent keystone. Second-floor windows, similarly paired, are round-headed, while the third-floor windows are round-headed, and grouped in threes in a loose adaptation of the Venetian window motif. The building has a clearly-defined vertical element, supported by the dimensions and layout of the windows. Overall, this is a well-proportioned facade that contributes a satisfying play of void and solid to the local townscape.²³

²¹ 1897 The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District]

²² Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Report*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006), p.27.

²³ Wellington City Council, “Kennedy Building”, *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings* (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA1.

The original plans show that the building was designed with two shops on the ground floor, and with a two-part division of the open floors on the three upper levels, suggesting a manufacturing and storage usage. The building is currently in commercial use with two retail units on the ground floor and studios and accommodation the floors above.

2.2 Materials

Load-bearing brick masonry on concrete foundations and piles. The floors are supported by cast-iron columns and steel beams. Floor joists and roof trusses are timber.²⁴

2.3 Setting

The Commercial Building is located in Block 1 of the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

Although the street is widest in this block, the proportions of the tall buildings create a strong sense of enclosure to the street, in contrast to the more open aspect of the other parts of the street. Most of the buildings in this block have attached verandahs, some original, which come in a variety of styles, do not conform to any continuous elevation line, and contribute to a general visual untidiness in the lower part of the streetscape. This street-level clutter has, however, been improved by the recent alterations to the landscaping of lower Cuba Street including the removal of the plethora of bus shelters directly in front of the former James Smith department store building.

The northern view down the street, which once extended to the harbour and provided an important visual link between this commercial area and the waterfront, is blocked by the Michael Fowler Centre. The southern view in this block is restricted by the trees growing in the Dixon Street block but appears open and expansive due to the much lower scale of the buildings beyond and the large open area and low-rise buildings at the immediate conjunction of Manners Mall and Cuba Street.

The character of the block is perhaps best illustrated by James Smiths building where the Art Deco façade turns around the corner from Manners Street and meets into a strong 50s modernist box along Cuba Street. The other buildings in this block are a heterogeneous mix of ages, types and styles which assemble to create a varied and interesting streetscape. The overall heritage and streetscape value of the block is reasonably high as many prominent Edwardian commercial buildings – Columbia Hotel, Kennedy building, T.G. McCarthy Trust, Last Footwear and others – remain to reinforce the line of the street wall and provide a high level of detail and visual variety to that street wall. Some of the modern buildings make a positive contribution to the street wall, including the former MED building and James Smiths. The Regent Theatre building, although built to the line of the street wall, merely presents a blank but ostentatiously dressed travertine marble façade which does not contribute to the heritage values of the block.²⁵

²⁴ Wellington City Council, "Kennedy Building", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings* (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA1.

²⁵ 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 References

1897 The Cyclopedia of New Zealand [Wellington Provincial District]

Certificates of Title

Papers past – various newspapers 1900 – 1945

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

Te Ara Encyclopedia

Wellington City Archive

Wellington City Council, “Kennedy Building”, *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA1.

Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (blocks 1-3)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

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 Kennedy Building is a four storey Edwardian Commercial building and the façade is a particularly good example of an Edwardian commercial façade designed in a simple Classical style.

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 is one four key prominent Edwardian buildings in Block 1 of the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

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 makes a strong positive contribution to the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

Historic Value:

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

- This building has close associations with an early Wellington family, the Kennedys. The initials of the two sisters, for whom the building was designed and built, remain on the parapet.

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

- The building was part of the Edwardian building boom in Cuba Street.

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 the 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?

- It is part of Wellington's early commercial centre.
- The building façade has remained (relatively) unchanged on the site for over 100 years and contributes 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 a good representative example of inner-city Edwardian commercial Classical architecture.

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 Edwardian Classical style façade is relatively unmodified and retains large areas of original building fabric.

Local/Regional/National/International

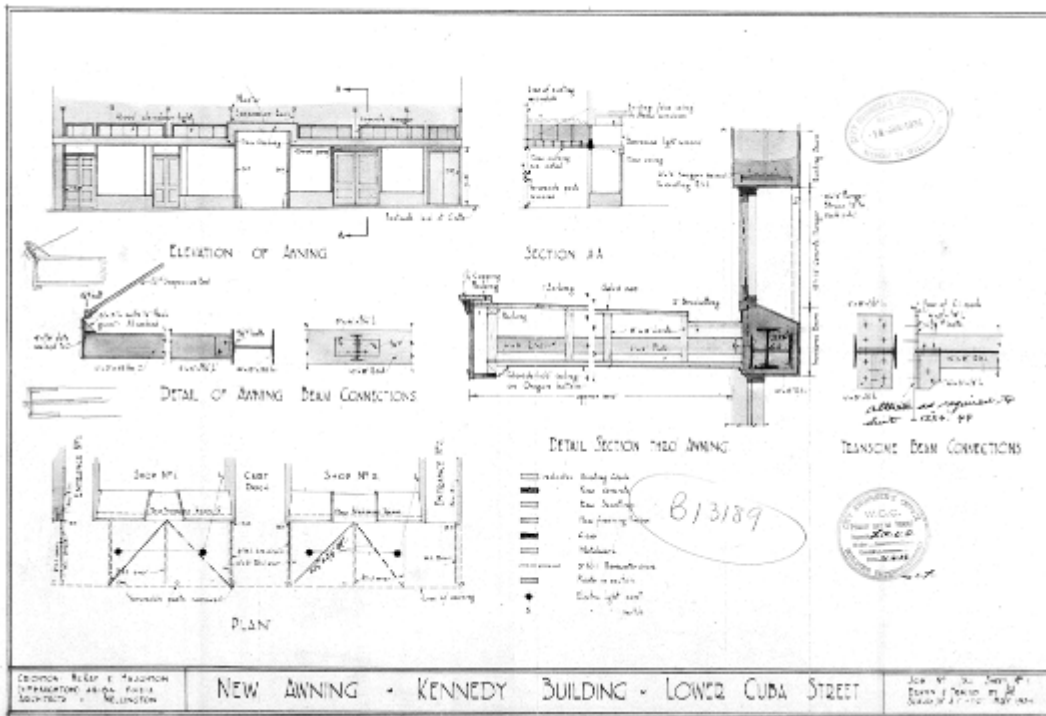
Is the item important for any of the above characteristics at a local, regional, national, or international level?

4.0 Appendix

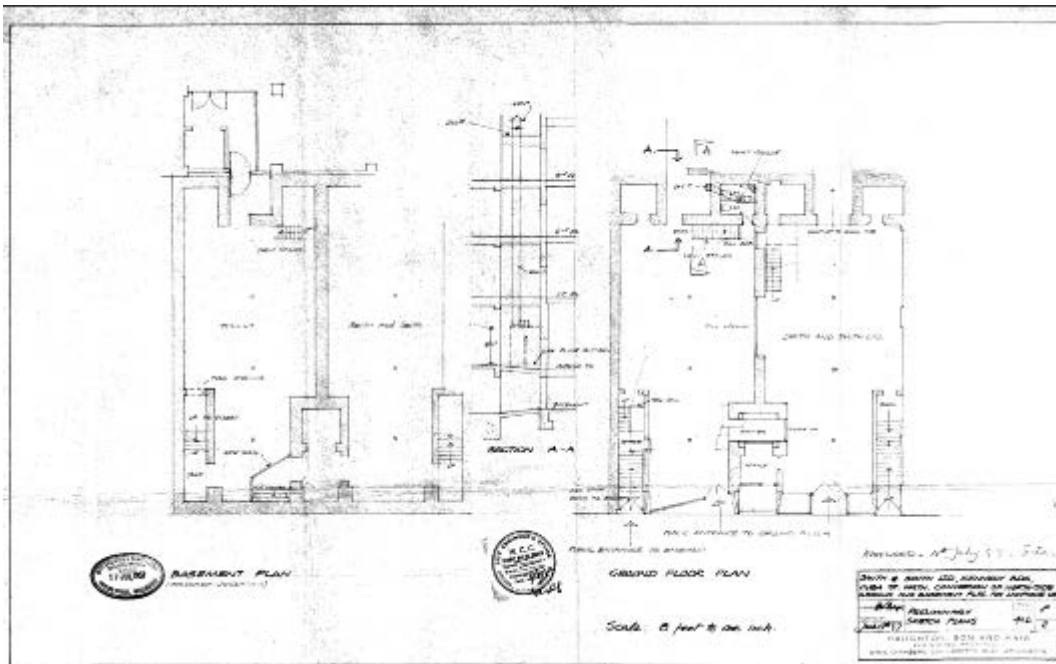
Background research

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	Y	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	Y	
Heritage items folder (electronic)		
HPT website	Y	
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	



New Awning 1934 Addition
(00056:146:B13189)



Building Alterations to Basement 1957
(00058:29:C1519)

WCC Permits

00053: 102:576 1	Cuba Street extension [33-39 Cuba Street],	Owner: Smith and Smith. Applicant: Smith and Smith. Note: Known as the Kennedy Building.	Building Permit/Consent	28 Nov 1903
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	brick building			
00053: 119:656 9	Cuba Street extension [33-39 Cuba Street], warehouse	Applicant: Campbell and Burke. Owner: Martin Kennedy. Architect: James O'Dea. Notes: Known as the Kennedy Building.	Building Permit/Consent	01 Jun 1905
00056: 146:B13 189	33-39 Cuba Street, verandah	Legal description: Town Acre 211, Lots 7-8 DP 845. Owner: Kennedy Estate. Builder: Irvine and Burr. Architect: Crichton McKay & Haughton. Application value: £250. Note: Permit is for the removal of an existing verandah and erection of a new awning.	Building Permit/Consent	21 Jun 1934
00056: 385:B2 9681	33-39 Cuba Street, shop front	Legal description: Town Acre 211, Lots 7-8 DP 845. Owner: Smith and Smith. Builder: Flack and Sidet. Architect: Kelly and Mair. Application value: £150	Building Permit/Consent	10 May 1950
00058: 29:C151 9	33-39 Cuba Street, building alterations, basement and ground floor	Legal description: Lot 7 and 8 Town Acre 211 DP 845, Lot 1 DPs 6917 and 7610. Owner: Smith and Smith. Builder: HG Field and Co. Application value: £350	Building Permit/Consent	06 Aug 1957
00059: 607:E2 7035	33 Cuba Street, structural upgrade	Owner: Dr M Pitt. Builder: Adrian Osborne. Legal description: Lots 7-8 DP 845. Application value: \$64,000. Note: Has one typical floor plan (level 1) but no other plans.	Building Permit/Consent	1993

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VICTORIA BUILDINGS, AUCKLAND
(Showrooms).

9 STAFFORD-STREET, DUNEDIN
(Showrooms).

CHANCERY LANE, CHRISTCHURCH
(Showrooms in course of erection).

NZ Truth , Issue 264, 16 July 1910, Page 3

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35, Lower Cuba street. Tel. 42-351.

Evening Post, Volume CXIV, Issue 115, 11 November 1932, Page 15

PAINT Manufacturers
GLASS
AND
WALLPAPER Merchants
SMITH & SMITH LTD.
THE PAINT PEOPLE

Smith & Smith advertisement
Evening Post, Volume CXVI, Issue 76, 27 September 1933, Page 15