

## **Columbia Private Hotel**

30-38 Cuba Street



*Image: Charles Collins, 2015*

### **Summary of heritage significance**

- The Columbia Private Hotel is a particularly good representative example of a grand Edwardian hotel. It is notable for its strongly modelled and symmetrical street-façade.
- The primary historic value of the building derives from the fact that it was built as, and remained, a private hotel for over 80 years.
- The building also has historic value for its association with the Dwan Brothers, who were well-connected and successful Wellington businessmen. It was designed by prominent local architect J. M. Dawson.
- The buildings ornate Edwardian Classical façade, distinctive for its strong modelling and symmetrical composition, makes a significant contribution to the lower Cuba Street townscape, and the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

District Plan:	Map 17, reference 72/1
Legal Description:	Lot 1 DP 85816
Heritage Area:	Cuba Street Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	Historic Place Category 2, reference 3636 Cuba Street Historic Area
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	Lloyd's Hotel, Columbia Apartments
Key physical dates:	Built 1908
Architect / Builder:	Architect: JM Dawson / Builder: E and A Reynall
Former uses:	Private hotel
Current uses:	Residential - apartments
Earthquake Prone Status:	Not EQP (SR 160476)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



## 1.0 Outline History

### 1.1 History

The Columbia Private Hotel was designed by J.M. Dawson and was built for the Dwan Brothers in 1908.

The Dwan Brothers<sup>1</sup> entered into business together in 1879<sup>2</sup> as hotel brokers and land and commission agents. Based on Willis Street, the business was very successful over the next forty odd years.<sup>3</sup> The brothers became some of Wellington's most prominent business men of the time, and were also known as successful racehorse owners and breeders.

The Columbia Private Hotel opened in January 1909<sup>4</sup> and boasted every modern convenience, such as: hot water, a night and day porter, heaters throughout the bedrooms, and an electric elevator.<sup>5</sup> The front portion of the building was five storeys high with a roof top garden which had a commanding view of the city and harbour.<sup>6</sup> The back portion was six storeys high, with the extra storey accommodating the kitchen and servants quarters. On the ground floor there were three large shops which were let out to various tenants. A spacious lounge hall led to a 100 person dining hall at the rear of the building. The hotel had over 90 bedrooms, twelve bathrooms, and several smoking, sitting and writing rooms.



The Columbia Private Hotel c 1930 (ATL, Ref: 1/1-015621-F)

The hotel operated as the 'Columbia Private Hotel' until it was sold in 1938 and reopened as 'Lloyd's Hotel'. Lloyd's Hotel made the news in February 1940 when a fire broke out and a young waitress employed at the hotel was killed.<sup>7</sup> It was thought the fire started on the ground floor and spread quickly throughout the floors above, via the disused dumb-waiter shaft and a stairwell.<sup>8</sup> Ownership changed hands in 1947 and again in 1965, and from the 1970s the hotel was again known as the Columbia Hotel.

The building has undergone several alterations, the most notable being its conversion to apartments in 1995, with two further floors of apartments added in 1999. The ground floor has been converted to retail, with a new shop front being added.

<sup>1</sup> Thomas Beaumont Dwan (1861-1933), and Lamartine d'Keeshan Dwan (1865-1937)

<sup>2</sup> "Mr. T. B. Dwan," *Evening Post*, Volume CXV, Issue 77, 1 April 1933, Page 12

<sup>3</sup> "Obituary," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 125, 28 May 1937, Page 11

<sup>4</sup> *Evening Post*, Volume LXXVII, Issue 9, 12 January 1909, Page 2

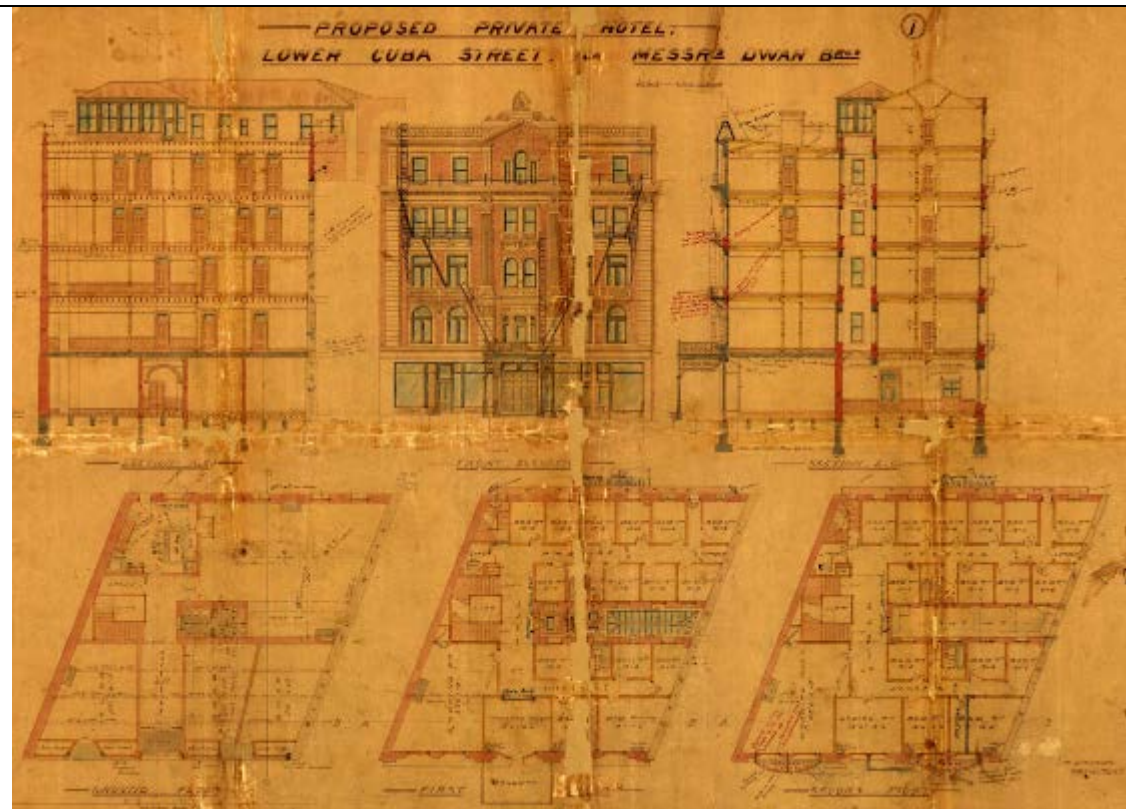
<sup>5</sup> *Dominion*, Volume 2, Issue 463, 23 March 1909, Page 6

<sup>6</sup> "Another Private Hotel," *Progress*, Volume III, Issue 8, 1 June 1908, Page 276

<sup>7</sup> "Fire Tragedy," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIX, Issue 35, 10 February 1940, Page 12

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

## 1.2 Timeline of modifications



J M Dawson's 1908 plans for the Columbia Private Hotel (WC Archives, 00053:143:7955)

- 1908 Building constructed (00053:143:7955)
- 1940 Building damaged by fire
- 1942 Erect parapet (00056:277:B22383)
- 1943 Reinstatement after earthquake (00056:287:B22987)
- 1966 Alterations (00058:477:C20540)
- 1995 Building and alterations, hotel converted to apartments, extension with balcony added (00061:102:13313)
- 1999 Addition of two new floors - levels 5 and 6 added (00078:435:52921, 00078:435:54180)
- 2008 Repairs (00078:3370:171403)
- 2010 Remove and replace existing shop front window (00078:3898:204472)

## 1.3 Occupation history<sup>9</sup>

- 1909-1938 Columbia Private Hotel (Stones 1910-11, 1915-16, 1920, 1925, 1930, 1935)
- 1938-c1968 Lloyd's Private Hotel (Stones 1940, 1945, Wises 1950-51, 1955, 1961-62, 1967-68)
- c1968-c1990 Columbia Hotel-Motel (Wises 1971-72, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990)
- 1995 Converted to apartments

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



## 1.4 Architect

### Joseph McClatchie Dawson (1877-1956)<sup>10</sup>

Joseph Dawson was born in the Wairarapa. His father was a contractor in the district and Dawson's education included a background in construction work. In 1900 he left New Zealand and travelled to South Africa, England and Australia, returning in 1906 to establish his own architectural practice in Wellington.

Dawson was an inaugural member of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, formed in 1905, and became a Fellow of the Institute in 1913. He was its president from 1938-1940. He formed close associations with the entrepreneurs of the burgeoning motor vehicle industry, designing showrooms, assembly plants and office buildings for, among others, Hatrick and Co. and the Colonial Motor Company.

In 1929 he appointed Jack Ian King (1900-1972) as his first partner. In 1946 Dawson entered semi-retirement, retiring in 1948. The firm he founded continues as King and Dawson.

Dawson designed a number of Wellington buildings, including:

- Columbia Hotel, Cuba Street (1908)
- T.G. Macarthy Building, Willis Street (1913)
- Hatricks Motor Garage (now Manthel Motors), corner Taranaki and Wakefield Streets (1913)
- CMC Building, Courtenay Place (1920)
- Hope Gibbons Building, cnr Taranaki and Dixon Street (1925)
- 'Ngaroma', Hope B. Gibbon's family residence, Queens Dr Lyall Bay (1926)
- Edilson's Building, 171-173 Cuba Street (1928)
- James Smith's 1932 refurbishment and new façade

## 2.0 Physical description

### 2.1 Architecture

The Columbia Hotel is a five-storey building with an ornate Edwardian Classical façade. The building was converted to apartments in 1995, and is now capped by a somewhat graceless modern roof-top addition that dates from c.1999.<sup>11</sup>

The original five-storey hotel is distinctive for its strong modelling and symmetrical composition, with three vertical bays divided by rusticated pilasters at the sides and fluted pilasters to the central bay. Below the verandah, the original shop-fronts have been replaced. Above the verandah, the façade is divided into three principal storeys and a fourth storey above a strongly projecting cornice. The cornice is supported on large corbels atop the pilasters dividing the bays, with small consoles between. The windows to the first floor are arched with heavy architraves under elegant curved second-floor balconies; in the centre is an angular oriel window. At the second floor, the windows are square on the sides, with a pair of arched windows in the centre.

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<sup>10</sup> Historic Places Trust, "Dawson, Joseph McClatchie.", *Professional Biographies*, accessed 4 September 2012, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?ID=47>

<sup>11</sup> Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Report* (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006), 28.

The third floor windows are all square with the central windows letting out to a square balcony. Above the cornice is an entablature of sorts (where evidently a substantial original parapet has been partly removed).

## **2.2 Materials**

The construction is load-bearing brick masonry on concrete foundations and piles, with timber floor joists.<sup>12</sup>

## **2.3 Setting**

The Columbia Hotel is on the western side of lower Cuba Street, between Wakefield and Manners Street. Its strong modelling makes a significant contribution to the lower Cuba Street townscape.

The immediate area has a heterogeneous mix of buildings of different ages, scales, types and styles which assemble to create a varied and interesting streetscape.

The building is flanked to the south by the former MED building, a sparsely detailed '60s modernist alteration of an original 1920s building of a similar height to the Columbia but only five storeys. Immediately to the north of the Columbia Hotel is a modern temporary two-storey building, which is too small in scale for its site and breaks the street edge with a projecting bay above ground level.

## **3.0 Sources**

Historic Places Trust, "Dawson, Joseph McClatchie.", *Professional Biographies*, accessed 4 September 2012, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?ID=47>

Kelly, Michael, and Russell Murray, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Report* (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006), 28.

Wellington City Council, "36-38 Cuba Street," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 2.

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

### **Newspapers**

"Another Private Hotel," *Progress*, Volume III, Issue 8, 1 June 1908, Page 276

*Evening Post*, Volume LXXVII, Issue 9, 12 January 1909, Page 2

*Dominion*, Volume 2, Issue 463, 23 March 1909, Page 6

"Mr. T. B. Dwan," *Evening Post*, Volume CXV, Issue 77, 1 April 1933, Page 12

"Obituary," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 125, 28 May 1937, Page 11

"Fire Tragedy," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIX, Issue 35, 10 February 1940, Page 12

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<sup>12</sup> Wellington City Council, "36-38 Cuba Street," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 2.

## 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 Columbia Private Hotel is a particularly good representative example of a grand Edwardian hotel. It is notable for its strongly modelled and symmetrical 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?*

The building is one of the grand and ornate Edwardian Classical buildings that is typical of, and contributes to the character and sense of place of, the northern end 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 is one of a group of Edwardian commercial buildings which make a positive contribution to the character of the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

#### **Historic Value:**

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

The primary historical value of the building derives from the fact that it was built as, and remained, a private hotel for over 80 years.

The building has historic value for its connection to the Dwan Brothers, who were well-connected and successful Wellington businessmen.

It was designed by prominent local architect J. M. Dawson.

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

The building also 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.

#### **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?*

**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 Columbia Private Hotel is a good example of a grand Edwardian hotel.

**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 façade of this building retains a high level of architectural authenticity, despite modifications to the ground floor shop front and the addition of two extra storeys.

**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.



## 5.0 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)	Y	
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
Plan change?		
Heritage Area Report	Y	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	Y	
Heritage items folder (electronic)	Y	
HPT website	Y	
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	Nothing

### Background research

#### DWAN BROTHERS

The Dwan brothers were born in Inglewood Victoria (Thomas Beaumont in 1861<sup>13</sup>, and Lamartine d'Keeshan in 1865<sup>14</sup>). The family moved to New Zealand c1866 and settled in Charleston on the West Coast, at that time a prosperous gold-mining town. Several years later the family moved to Wellington where the father established 'Thomas Dwan and Company', an auctioneering and land agency.<sup>15</sup> Both brothers were involved in this business. In 1879 the brothers founded 'Dwan Brothers'<sup>16</sup>, a firm that operated successfully from an office on Willis Street for the next forty years.<sup>17</sup> The brothers became some of Wellington's most prominent business men of the time, and were also known as successful racehorse owners and breeders.

TB

= land values – valuer for government and city council

= hotel broker

The brothers became some of Wellington's most prominent business men of the time, and were also known as successful racehorse owners and breeders.

T.B. Dwan died in 1933, and L.D. Dwan in 1937.

<sup>13</sup> "Mr. T. B. Dwan," *Evening Post*, Volume CXV, Issue 77, 1 April 1933, Page 12

<sup>14</sup> "Obituary," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 125, 28 May 1937, Page 11

<sup>15</sup> "Obituary," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 125, 28 May 1937, Page 11

<sup>16</sup> "Mr. T. B. Dwan," *Evening Post*, Volume CXV, Issue 77, 1 April 1933, Page 12

<sup>17</sup> "Obituary," *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 125, 28 May 1937, Page 11

### **Thomas Beaumont Dwan (1861-1933)**

- died 1 April 1933

### **Lamartine d'Keeshan Dwan (1865-1937)**

- Born Inglewood, Victoria, 1865<sup>18</sup>
- One year old his family moved to Charleston on the West Coast of New Zealand<sup>19</sup>
- Moved to Wellington after a few years<sup>20</sup>
- Father opened a business<sup>21</sup> Thomas Dwan and Company
- Assisted his father<sup>22</sup>
- Later started Dwan Brothers with his brother Thomas B Dwan<sup>23</sup> - this was successfully carried on in Willis Street for over forty years.
- prominent wellington business man<sup>24</sup>
- successful racehorse owner<sup>25</sup>
- brothers were successful racehorse owners – for years carried on a stud known as Rosenea<sup>26</sup>
- one of the oldest members of the Wellington Racing Club<sup>27</sup>
- retired c1927 from active business<sup>28</sup>
- died 27 May 1937, aged 71<sup>29</sup>
- left a wife and one son – Leo. T. Dwan

### **Father – Thomas Dwan (c1827-1906)**

“Entre Nous,” *Free Lance*, Volume VII, Issue 335, 1 December 1906, Page 12

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<sup>18</sup> “Obituary”, *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 125, 28 May 1937, Page 11

<sup>19</sup> “Obituary”, *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 125, 28 May 1937, Page 11

<sup>20</sup> “Obituary”, *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 125, 28 May 1937, Page 11

<sup>21</sup> “Obituary”, *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 125, 28 May 1937, Page 11

<sup>22</sup> “Obituary”, *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 125, 28 May 1937, Page 11

<sup>23</sup> “Obituary”, *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 125, 28 May 1937, Page 11

<sup>24</sup> *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 130, 3 June 1937, Page 17

<sup>25</sup> *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 130, 3 June 1937, Page 17

<sup>26</sup> “Obituary”, *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 125, 28 May 1937, Page 11

<sup>27</sup> “Obituary”, *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 125, 28 May 1937, Page 11

<sup>28</sup> “Obituary”, *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 125, 28 May 1937, Page 11

<sup>29</sup> “Obituary”, *Evening Post*, Volume CXXIII, Issue 125, 28 May 1937, Page 11