

## James Smith Ltd Department Store (former)

49-65 Cuba Street & 93-97 Manners Street



Image: Charles Collins, 2015

### Summary of heritage significance

- The former James Smith Ltd Department Store is made up of five buildings. The original (1907) block has the greatest aesthetic value. It was remodelled in 1932 and is now a good representative example of an Art Deco commercial building. It is notable for its emphatic vertical piers, stepped roof-profile, fluted parapet frieze, and typical 1930s lettering that runs down the central column on the Cuba/Manners Street corner.
- The five buildings on the site have a historic association with both the development of Cuba Street as a commercial precinct and with the James Smith department store that was a well known local institution until its closure in 1993.
- The 1907/32 building has townscape value for its prominent location on the corner of the Cuba and Manners Street intersection.

District Plan:	Map 16 reference 74/2
Legal Description:	Pt Lot 1 DP 845 Lots 2,3 & 4 DP 845 Lots 1 & 2 DP 6917 Pt DP 10670 Lot 2 DP 22705 Lot 1 DP 8649
Heritage Area:	Cuba Street Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	Category II Reference 5379
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270 Māori site of significance
Other Names:	James Smith's Market
Key physical dates:	1907 (refurbished in 1932) 1927 (5-storey addition to the east/ Pringle Ave) 1932 -4 (re-clad with Art Deco façade to Manners and Cuba St & 5-storey addition built) 1963 to 1965 (the 3-storey building to the north on Cuba Street was built)
Architect / Builder:	1907 Penty and Blake / J.M. Dawson and King (1932) 1927 J.M. Dawson 1934 J.M. Dawson 1964-65 Mitchell & Mitchell
Former uses:	Department store
Current uses:	Commercial
Earthquake Prone Status:	124 served – expires 28/03/2026 SR 163338

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



## 1.0 Outline History

### 1.1 History

The first of five buildings which would eventually become known as the James Smith Ltd Department Store was erected in 1907 on the corner of Cuba and Manners Street. This new brick building was built for George Winder, an ironmonger, to replace his former shop in the same location.<sup>1</sup> As a result of this the corner came to be known as 'Winder's Corner.'<sup>2</sup> Because his store stocked heavy goods relating to ironmongery, the floors were designed to support over three times the expected amount of weight.<sup>3</sup> The store also sold imported carpets and furniture, with the first floor acting as a show room.<sup>4</sup>

The building was purchased in 1920 by James Smith Ltd. James Smith (?-1902)<sup>5</sup> had been the proprietor of Te Aro House, a large drapery business that was situated on the corner of Dixon and Cuba Street. Smith and his two sons opened a second drapery shop in Cuba Street at some time after 1888 and this business was known as The New House. He died in 1902 but appears to have been succeeded in the business by his sons.<sup>6</sup>

In 1927 James Smith Ltd commissioned a 5-storey, steel framed and concrete reinforced addition that was constructed at the rear of the original building on Pringle Ave.<sup>7</sup> In 1932 the existing building was then refurbished with a new Art Deco façade on the Cuba and Manners Street corner.<sup>8</sup> Further additions facing Manners Street were made in 1934<sup>9</sup> and two new 3-storey buildings facing Cuba Street were built from 1964 - 1965.<sup>10</sup>

The James Smith Department Store was a popular local establishment and sponsored the local Christmas Parade. The Smith family sold 60% of their holding to the Mace Development Corporation in 1986 and the department store closed in 1993.<sup>11</sup>

The building then became the site of a collection of shops known as James Smith market. The building was described as 'a shambles' with shops that were 'struggling' to survive, and much of the market closed in the early 2000s. In 2013 the ground floor continued to operate as a retail space, but the remaining floors appeared to be unoccupied (with the notable exception of the gym that appears to occupy most of the c.1964 -65 buildings).

<sup>1</sup> *Evening Post*, Volume LXXVII, Issue 100, 29 April 1909, Page 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> THE LATE MR. JAMES SMITH. *Evening Post*, 11 August 1902, Page 2; DEATH OF MR JAMES SMITH *Evening Post*, 4 August 1902, Page 6

<sup>6</sup> *Dominion*, 3 September 1920, Page 7.

<sup>7</sup> '49-69 Cuba Street: Additions,' March 23 1927, 00056:29:B2909, Wellington City Archives.

<sup>8</sup> '49-69 Cuba Street: Remodel front,' August 29 1932, 00056:130:B11856, Wellington City Archives.

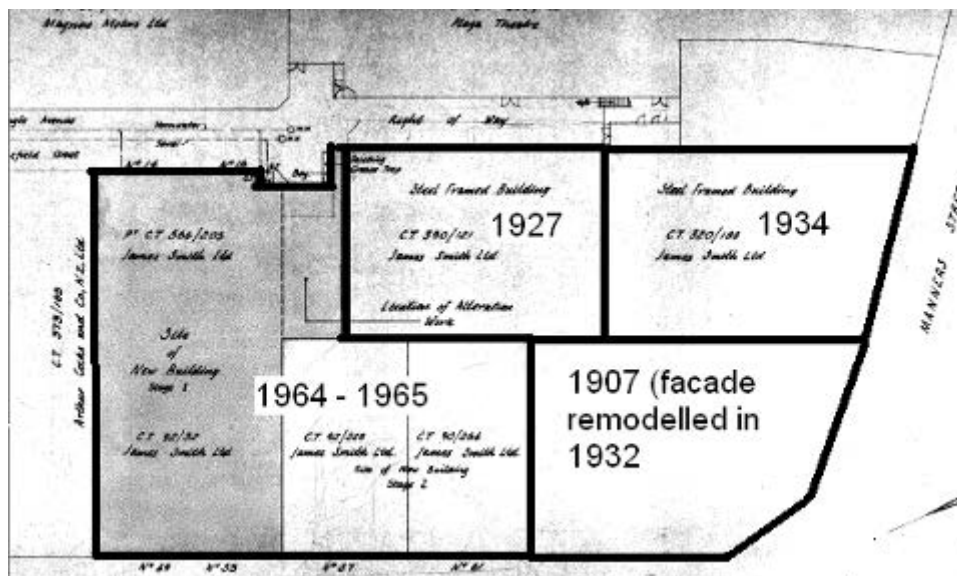
<sup>9</sup> '49-69 Cuba Street: Five storey addition,' 26 July 1934, 00056:147:B13245, Wellington City Archives.

<sup>10</sup> '49-69 Cuba Street: Building,' September 28 1965, 00058:419:C17929, Wellington City Archives.

<sup>11</sup> 'A Wellingtonian editorial: James Smiths a sad sight', *The Wellingtonian*, 19/08/2010



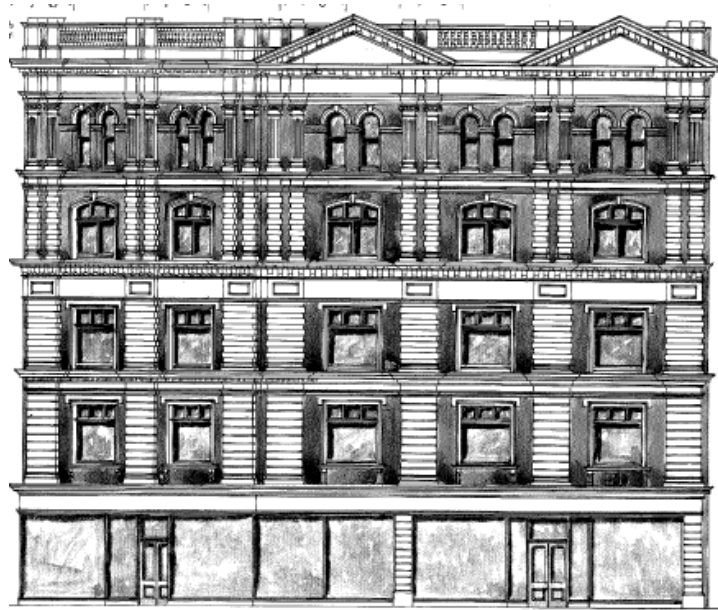
Cuba Street, Wellington. Smith, Sydney Charles, 1888-1972: Photographs of New Zealand. Ref: 1/2-048943-G. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand.



1965 site plan shows the approximate construction dates of the buildings<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> WCC Archives 00058-419-C17929

## 1.2 Timeline of modifications



Plans for original building on corner of Cuba and Manners Street, 1907 (WCA 00053:141:7851)



Plans for 1932 Art Deco façade of corner building (WCA 00056:130:B11856)

1907	Erect brick building	(00053:141:7851)
1927	Additions	(00056:29:B2909)
1932	Remodel front	(00056:130:B11856)
1934	Five storey addition	(00056:147:B13245)
1964	New building	(00058:321:C13867)
1965	New building	(00058:419:C17929)
1981	Structural alterations	\$920,000 (00058:1355:C56877)

### 1.3 Occupation history

1897 George Winder  
1921 James Smith's Department Store  
1993 James Smith's Market (various retail stores)  
2000 Various retail stores

### 1.4 Architect

Penty and Blake

Edward McCallum Blake and Francis Penty worked in partnership in Wellington, New Zealand. Charles Alexander Lawrence, formerly of Aberdeen, joined the practice as an assistant in 1907 and was taken into partnership in 1908. Penty and Lawrence continued in partnership after Blake left the firm in 1910.<sup>13</sup>

J.M. Dawson

J M Dawson (1877-1956) was born in the Wairarapa. His father was a contractor in this 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. His buildings include the T.G. McCarthy Building, Willis Street (1913), Hatricks Motor Garage (now Manthel Motors), corner Taranaki and Wakefield Streets (1913), and the Hope Gibbons Building, Dixon Street (1925). 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. Having appointed Jack Ian King (1900-1972) as his first partner in 1929, Dawson entered semi-retirement in 1946, retiring in 1948. The firm he founded continues as King and Dawson.<sup>14</sup>

Mitchell & Mitchell

The firm of Mitchell & Mitchell was established by the Mitchell brothers, Cyril Hawthorn Mitchell (d. 1949) and Alan Hawthorn Mitchell (d.1973). The brothers were two of a handful of prominent Wellington architects of the early twentieth century. C. H. Mitchell had qualified as an architect in 1913, forming the partnership with his younger brother when A. H. Mitchell returned from training in the United Kingdom in 1932. The Mitchell brothers designed many buildings throughout New Zealand, and both became fellows of the New Zealand Institute of Architects.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Dictionary of Scottish Architects, 'Blake and Penty,' accessed 3 September 2012, [http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect\\_full.php?id=201922](http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=201922).

<sup>14</sup> New Zealand Historic Places Trust Professional Biographies, 'Joseph McClatchie Dawson,' accessed 3 September 2012, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Dawson,+Joseph+McClatchie>.

<sup>15</sup> New Zealand Historic Places Trust Professional Biographies, 'Mitchell and Mitchell,' accessed 3 September 2012, <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Mitchell+amp+Mitchell>.

## 2.0 Physical description

### 2.1 Architecture

The former James Smith Ltd Department Store is comprised of a number of buildings:

**Building 1:** on the Manners Street Cuba Street corner was built in 1907. It has the greatest aesthetic value, but has undergone many changes and additions over the past 100 years. The heavy Edwardian character of the original building can still be guessed at in the arrangement of windows, particularly in the paired round-headed windows of the top (fourth) floor. The façade was remodelled in 1932 to an Art Deco-style, with emphatic vertical piers, stepped skyline, fluted frieze at parapet level, and typical 1930s lettering that runs vertically down the central column on the Cuba Street/ Manners Street corner. This character follows through into the interior spaces.<sup>16</sup>

**Building 2:** 93-97 Manners Street was built in 1934. Designed by King and Dawson, the architects for the 1932 façade on the corner building, it was designed to complement the corner building. It is somewhat simpler than that of Building 1, but it has similar Art Deco features that include the decorative parapet, and the expressed external pilasters.

**Building 3:** on Pringle Ave was constructed in 1927. It appears to have little streetscape value as it can only be viewed from Pringle Ave, a narrow service lane accessed from Wakefield Street.

**Buildings 4 & 5:** at 49-61 Cuba Street were built in 1964 and 1965 with a mosaic tile façade – this has since been replaced with a modern cladding system. They are three storeys high, and their most notable feature is the well-proportioned stairwell that acts as a ‘book-end’ to the north end of the former James Smith site.

### 2.2 Setting

The James Smith Ltd Department Store dominates the intersection between Manners and Cuba Streets. The 1963-1965 additions continue along the eastern length of Cuba Street before joining with heritage buildings at the northern end of the street. On the Manners Street side the 1934 addition is adjoined by a two storey modern building which separates it from the nearby State Opera House. With both its physical presence and historic role as a department store, the James Smith Building continues to contribute to the overall setting of Cuba and Manners Street.

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<sup>16</sup>Architecture taken from: Wellington City Council, “49-69 Cuba Street,” *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Precincts* (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA4.

### **3.0 Sources**

Dictionary of Scottish Architects. 'Blake and Penty.' Accessed 3 September 2012.  
[http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect\\_full.php?id=201922](http://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/architect_full.php?id=201922).

New Zealand Historic Places Trust Professional Biographies. 'Joseph McClatchie Dawson.' Accessed 3 September 2012.  
<http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Dawson,+Joseph+McClatchie>.

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<http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Mitchell+ amp +Mitchell>.

Wellington City Council. "49-69 Cuba Street." *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Precincts*. Wellington City Council, 2001. CUBA4.

#### **Newspapers**

*Dominion*. Volume 13, Issue 292. 3 September 1920. Page 7.

*Evening Post*. Volume LXXVII, Issue 100. 29 April 1909. Page 3.

#### **Wellington City Archives**

'49-69 Cuba Street: Additions.' March 23 1927. 00056:29:B2909.

'49-69 Cuba Street: Remodel front.' August 29 1932. 00056:130:B11856.

'49-69 Cuba Street: Five storey addition.' 26 July 1934. 00056:147:B13245.

'49-69 Cuba Street: Building.' September 28 1965. 00058:419:C17929.



## 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 James Smith Ltd Department Store is made up of five buildings. The original (1907) block has the greatest aesthetic value. It was remodelled in 1932 and is now a good representative example of an Art Deco commercial building. It is notable for its emphatic vertical piers, stepped roof-profile, fluted parapet frieze, and typical 1930s lettering that runs down the central column on the Cuba/Manners Street corner.

***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 1907 /32 building has townscape value for its prominent location on the corner of the Cuba and Manners Street intersection.

***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 part of the Cuba Street Heritage Area which, because of its unique collection of heritage buildings, contributes to both a local Wellington identity.

#### **Historic Value:**

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

The 1907 building was originally built by George Winder, a prominent businessman and city councillor in Wellington at the turn of the twentieth century. The building was later purchased and refurbished by James Smith Ltd, a prominent local department store.

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

The five buildings on this site have representative historic value for their association with the strong period of development which took place on Cuba Street between 1900 and 1910.

#### **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 as the building is located near the former Te Aro Pa. The building is also 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?*

The 1907/32 building's exterior has had few intrusive alterations in the past 80 years and contributes to the sense of place and continuity of Cuba and Manners Streets.

**Sentiment/Connection:** *Is the item a focus of community sentiment and connection?*

The buildings were the site of a well-known and well-regarded department store for over seventy years, as well as being a constant feature of Cuba Street. Many Wellingtonians will feel sentiment and connection with this building, although this will diminish over time.

**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's façade is representative of the Art Deco style.

**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?*

Although the original 1907 exterior was refurbished in 1932 the Art Deco façade has retained a significant amount of its original fabric and 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 building has helped to define the Cuba and Manners Street intersection and is historically associated with the development of the area it is important on a local level. The building is also important on a national level since it is part of the Cuba Street Heritage Area, a precinct which contains a unique collection of heritage buildings.

### 3.0 Appendix

#### Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory		
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)	Y	

#### Background research