

## **The Vic Private Hotel (Former)**

154-156 Cuba Street



“The Vic” (*Charles Collins, 2014*)

### **Summary of heritage significance**

- Designed by James Bennie, this three story 1930s building is an exuberant example of Art Deco design, of which there are relatively few examples in Wellington.
- The building has historic value for the 35 years of use as ‘The Vic Private Hotel’.
- The façade of this building remains largely intact with a high level of original fabric, despite modifications to the ground floor shop fronts.
- The Vic is part of a group of historic commercial buildings on Cuba Street which contribute to the character, sense of place and continuity of the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

District Plan:	Map 16, Symbol 83
Legal Description:	Lot 1 DP 2686
Heritage Area:	Cuba Street Heritage Area (block 4)
HPT Listed:	Category II, 5356. Cuba Street Historic Area, 7209
Archaeological Site:	
Other Names:	Lotus Restaurant Building
Key physical dates:	Built: 1935 / Additional storey: 1935
Architect / Builder:	Architect: James Bennie / Builder: J Campbell
Former uses:	Commercial / Residential
Current uses:	Commercial / Residential
Earthquake Prone Status:	Front bldg: s124 served (SR 165091) Rear bldg: s124 served (SR 204553)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



## 1.0 Outline History

### 1.1 History

This three-storey building was designed by James Bennie and built for Mrs Alice Elizabeth Tatum (?1853 -1943). Originally designed as a two-storey building, the permit was issued in July 1935. A special application was made to add an extra storey and a further permit for an additional floor was issued in November 1935. Alice Tatum was the wife of Major Charles Thomas Tatum (1857 – 1942), and the couple are best remembered for their charitable bequests to both the Wellington Anglican Cathedral fund, and to the Boy Scout movement, particularly for their donation of their farm in Manakau that became known as Tatum Park.<sup>1</sup> Tatum Park was the national training centre for Boy Scout leaders from approximately 1940 – 2008, and served as a camp ground and conference centre.<sup>2</sup>

The Cuba Street building was built in front of, and joined to, an existing wooden structure which housed tearooms<sup>3</sup> and shops facing onto Cuba Street. It is presently unclear exactly when this timber building was built. The earliest record of a building on this site held at WC Archives dates from 1914 and is for additions and alteration to shops.<sup>4</sup> Advertisements in the *Evening Post* indicate that occupants in 1933 included the Wellington Brass Bands Association headquarters,<sup>5</sup> a Hairdresser and Tobacconist.<sup>6</sup> In February 1935 the ‘Centenary Café’ opened in the premises.<sup>7</sup>

The architect’s specifications state that: “The existing wooden portion which includes the butchers, hairdressers and boot shops, entrance to the present dining room and living quarters on the first floor are to be removed by contractor and the new reinforced concrete building as now planned erected on the site.”<sup>8</sup> The specifications also state that the existing buildings at the rear of the new portion and all adjoining premises were to be altered and made good. The butchers plant and layout were to be carefully protected during the alterations, and the present tenant of the barbers shop and the entrance to the dining room were to remain in occupation during reconstruction and were to be disturbed as little as possible.

The building was planned as a private hotel, with three shops below, and a dining room and kitchen behind to serve the boarding establishment above. The first floor had a lounge, eight bedrooms and a bathroom.<sup>9</sup> The second had nine bedrooms, a bathroom and a “lounge hall” with a skylight.

The plans show that the building was to be named “York House”. However a search of old newspapers has failed to find any mention of a “York House” on Cuba Street, although there was one at 180 Lambton Quay. It seems that a change of heart during construction saw it named The Vic. An advertisement in the *Evening Post* from April 1936 declares The “Vic” Private Hotel open, with double and single rooms available

<sup>1</sup> Kete Horowhenua website accessed November 2012

<http://horowhenua.kete.net.nz/site/documents/show/736-tatum-park-manakau> ; ‘Substantial Bequests’ *Evening Post* 27/03/1943; *Dominion* 13/06/1912; ‘Deaths’ *Evening Post* 1/03/1943; *Evening Post* 3/03/1888; ‘Obituary’ *Evening Post* 4/03/1943; ‘Marriage’ *Evening Post* 14/03/1881; ‘Substantial Bequests’ *Evening Post* 27/03/1943.

<sup>2</sup> ‘New chapter for historic Scouts venue’, *Dominion Post*, 24/05/2012

<sup>3</sup> *Evening Post*, Volume CXVI, Issue 33, 8 August 1933, Page 14

<sup>4</sup> WC Archives 00053:179:9879

<sup>5</sup> *Evening Post*, Volume CXV, Issue 27, 2 February 1933, Page 13

<sup>6</sup> *Evening Post*, Volume CXVI, Issue 66, 15 September 1933, Page 2

<sup>7</sup> *Evening Post*, Volume CXIX, Issue 28, 2 February 1935, Page 3

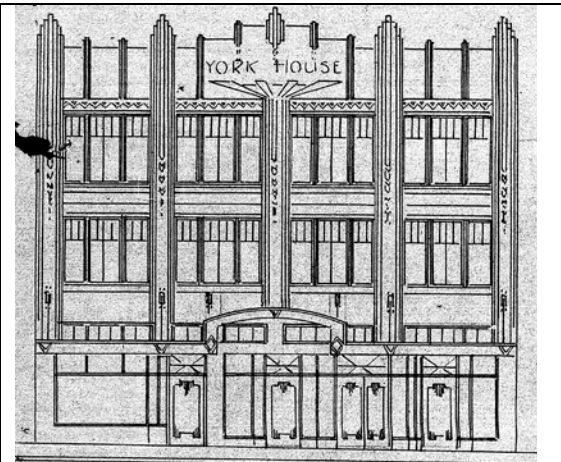
<sup>8</sup> WC Archives 00056:159:B14157

<sup>9</sup> WC Archives 00056:165:B14627

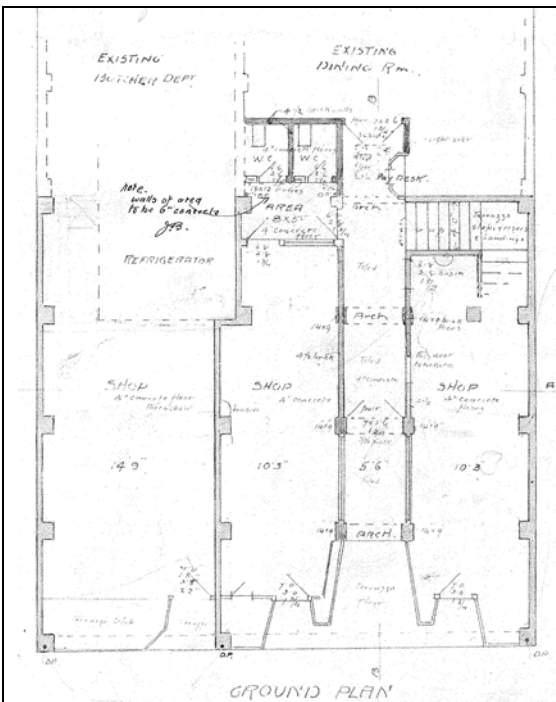
for both permanent and casual boarders.<sup>10</sup> The hotel is advertised as superior accommodation, having central heating throughout, a billiard room and palm lounge. The building continued to operate as The Vic Private Hotel up to the 1970s.



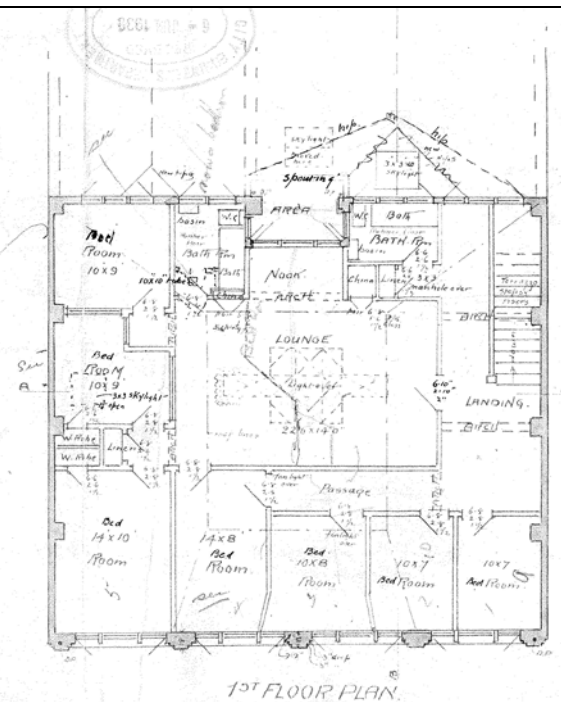
Detail from the original plan for the two storey building (00056:159:B14157)



Detail from the "Plan of three story building (in lieu of two story) for Mrs A.E. Tatum" (00056:165:B14627)



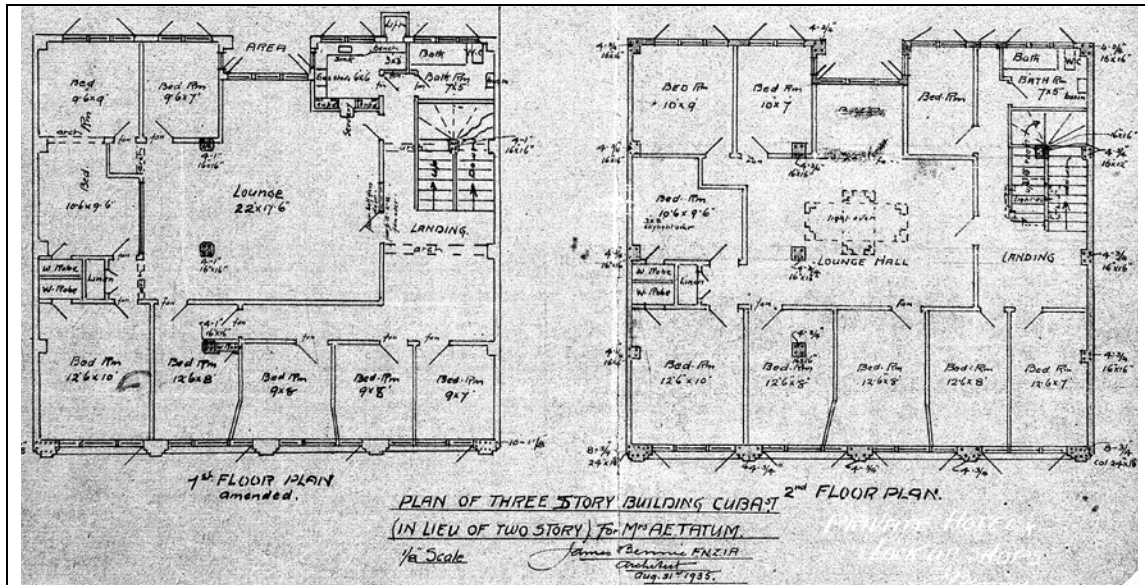
GROUND PLAN



1<sup>ST</sup> FLOOR PLAN

Detail from the original plan, showing the ground and first floor layouts (00056:159:B14157)

<sup>10</sup> *Evening Post*, Volume CXXI, Issue 99, 28 April 1936, Page 3



Detail from the plans, modified November 1935, showing the first and second floor layout (00056:165:B14627)

## 1.2 Timeline of modifications

- 1935 construction (00056:159:B14157)
- 1935 additional storey (00056:165:B14627)
- 1936 wash-houses (00056:173:B15279)
- 1949 convert shed to smokehouse (00056:363:B27943)
- 1958 shop additions and alterations (00058:75:C3689)
- 1962 building alterations to café (00058:259:C11489)
- 1970 shop alterations (00058:667:C30639)
- 1973 building alterations (00058:887:C39450)
- 1978 reconstruct and renovate part of building – The Lotus Restaurant (00058:1151:C49619)
- 1986 convert existing shop to takeaway – Lotus Chinese Takeaways (00059:0:D5136)
- 1988 additions to Chinese takeaways (00059:188:D9114)
- 1989 restaurant fitout (00059:329:E18531)
- 1993 Archway (00060:37:1403)
- 1994 takeaway conversion (00060:24:924)
- 2001 apartment fit out (00078:975:80507)
- 2006 restaurant additions and alterations (00078:2098:149626)

### 1.3 Occupation history <sup>11</sup>

Victoria Private Hotel (from 1945 "The Vic") (154) (Stones1940, 1945, Wises1950-51, 1955, 1971-72),

Irma Duncan, beauty salon (154) (Stones1945, Wises1950-51),

Reliance Butchery (156) (Stones1940),

Excelsior Butchery (Stones1945, Wises1961-62, 1967-68, 1971-72),

Star Butchery & Delicatessen (Wises1950-51,1955).

After this time occupied by a number of businesses at one time including:

Electrical good, restaurant, shoe shop (Wises1961-62)

Frock shop (Wises1967-68)

Lotus Restaurant (Wises1967-68, 1971-72, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990)

Steiners Butchery (Wises1980, 1985)

2012: Istanbul (restaurant) and Carly Harris (clothes store).

### 1.4 Architect

#### James Bennie<sup>12</sup> (1873-1945)

James Bennie was born in Ayrshire, Scotland, immigrated to New Zealand in 1880 and settled in Brunnertown near Greymouth. In the early 1890s he attended the Working Men's College in Melbourne, Australia, where he studied under artist and architect Thomas Searell. On completion of his studies he returned to Greymouth and set up in practice as an architect. In 1903 Bennie moved to Wellington and went into practice with E C Farr before establishing his own practice in 1905.

Some of Bennie's designs include the Albermarle Hotel, Wellington (1905), the Carnegie Library at Levin (1910), the Karori Methodist Church (1912), and the Oriental Bay Tea Kiosk (1912, demolished 1978). He designed a number of theatres including Kings (1910), Queens (1916), the Crown (1916) and Paramount (1917), all in Wellington and was also responsible for the design of many houses including the Wedge, Glenbervie Terrace (1906) and Bennie house, Salamanca road (1907) both in Wellington.



He also had an interest in prefabricated house design. Bennie was an inaugural member of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, founded in 1905, and was later elected a Fellow. He retired in 1935 and his son Malcolm took over the Wellington practice.

<sup>11</sup> Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (block 4)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

<sup>12</sup> Historic Places Trust, "Bennie, James", *Professional Biographies*. Accessed 1 August 2012.

<http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?ID=23>

<sup>13</sup> "Mr James Bennie", *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand [Nelson, Marlborough & Westland Provincial Districts]*, 1906. Accessed 1 August 2012. <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc05Cycl-t1-body1-d3-d26-d28.html>

## **2.0 Physical description**

### **2.1 Architecture**

The architect has adopted superficial features of Art Deco to give the building a contemporary exterior. Slender fins rise over both floors to the parapet and provide an exaggerated vertical emphasis. Secondary fins over the stepped parapet repeat this emphasis. The central pier is capped by the famous “sunrise” motif of Art Deco, and a strip of chevron moulding runs above the upper windows. The window joinery also reiterates the vertical flavour of the building. A full-blown Art Deco facade is rare in Cuba Street and the building contributes a more contemporary flavour to a predominantly Edwardian precinct.<sup>14</sup>

### **2.2 Materials**

The construction is reinforced concrete walls, beams and columns on concrete foundations and piles. The first floor is reinforced concrete, and the second floor joists and roof trusses are timber. The roof is clad in corrugated iron.<sup>15</sup>

### **2.3 Setting<sup>16</sup>**

This block of Cuba Street, between Ghuznee and Vivian Streets, retains some of the area’s oldest buildings. The Vic’s immediate neighbours are two modern buildings: to the north, on the corner of Garret Street, stands the bulky seven-storey concrete Crombie Lockwood House which is considerably out of scale with the low-rise surroundings; to the south is a modern (2008) two storey building, with a very tall apartment tower behind, and a weathered steel facade.

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<sup>14</sup> Wellington City Council, “154-156 Cuba Street”, *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 21.

<sup>15</sup> Wellington City Council, “154-156 Cuba Street”, *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 21.

<sup>16</sup> 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 Sources

Historic Places Trust, "Bennie, James", *Professional Biographies*. Accessed 1 August 2012.

<http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?ID=23>

"Mr James Bennie", *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand [Nelson, Marlborough & Westland Provincial Districts]*, 1906. Accessed 1 August 2012.

<http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc05Cycl-t1-body1-d3-d26-d28.html>

Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area spreadsheet (block 4)*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

Wellington City Council, "154-156 Cuba Street", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 21.

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

#### **Newspapers**

*Evening Post*, Volume CXVI, Issue 33, 8 August 1933, Page 14

*Evening Post*, Volume CXV, Issue 27, 2 February 1933, Page 13

*Evening Post*, Volume CXVI, Issue 66, 15 September 1933, Page 2

*Evening Post*, Volume CXIX, Issue 28, 2 February 1935, Page 3

*Evening Post*, Volume CXXI, Issue 99, 28 April 1936, Page 3

#### **WC Archives**

00053:179:9879

00056:159:B14157

00056:165:B14627



## 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?

This three story 1930s building has architectural value for its strong Art Deco design which is particularly evident in its exuberant stepped and finned parapet. Art Deco buildings are rare in Wellington and there are few as richly decorated as this one.

***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?

A full-blown Art Deco facade is rare in Cuba Street and the building contributes a more contemporary flavour to a predominantly Edwardian precinct.

***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 historic 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 building was designed by James Bennie, a significant architect of his time.

The building has some historic value for the 35 year period it was used as The Vic Private Hotel.

***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?

It is known that there has been pre-1900 human activity on the site; hence this 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?

This building is part of a group of historic 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?

The Art Deco design of this building is rare on Cuba Street, and in wider 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?

The façade of this building remains largely intact with a high level of original building fabric, despite modifications to the ground floor shop fronts.

***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	N	Doesn't exist
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)		
Research notes from 2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
Plan change?		
Heritage Area Report	Y	
Heritage Area Spreadsheet	Y	
Heritage items folder (electronic)		
HPT website	Y	Errors – Architect / dates
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)		

### Background research

Evening Post, Volume CXX, Issue 22, 25 July 1935, Page 1  
**Contractor – selling 10,000 bricks**

Evening Post, Issue 30, 4 August 1936, Page 3  
**The Vic Private Hotel – vacancies for our numerous inquirers for permanent board**

Evening Post, Volume CXXIV, Issue 25, 29 July 1937, Page 3  
**Vic private hotel and restaurant, 154 Cuba Street (under new management – Mrs RA Pugh).  
 Vacancies for 4 permanent boarders.**

Evening Post, Volume CXXVI, Issue 103, 28 October 1938, Page 3  
**Vacancies for permanent boarders, single and double rooms, from 32s 6d; full board. Mrs H Pugh**



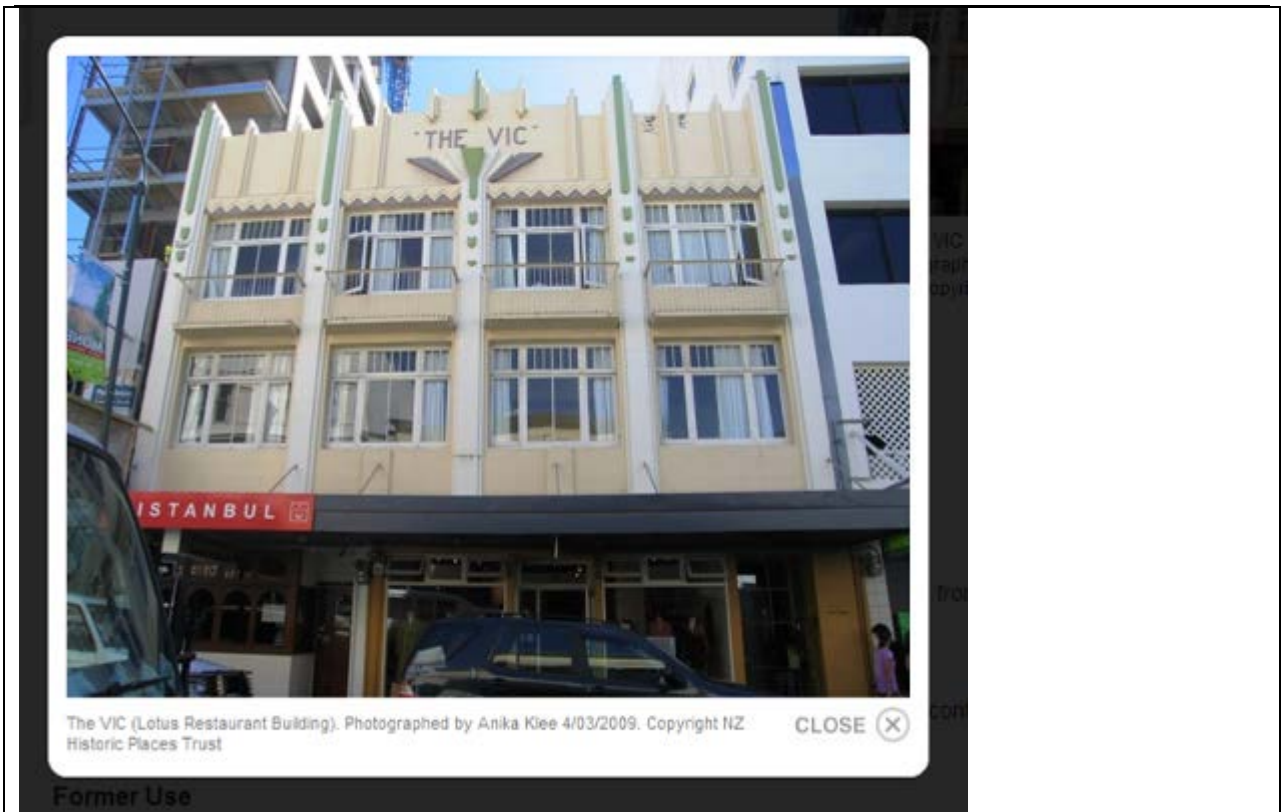
The Vic in 2005 (All rights reserved by pragmaticgeek)

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/moothall/32870457/sizes/l/in/photostream/>



The Vic in 2008 (All rights reserved by D Sefik)

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/30832316@N07/3204670179/sizes/l/in/photostream/>





<http://www.brendangrantartwork.com/cubastvicbuilding.html>

2008-9 neighbour Replaced this building:  
(From Heritage Area Spreadsheet – Block 3)

Building (Aotearoa) + outbuilding at rear  
158 Cuba St/Pt Sec 151 T.O.W  
1878-1879  
Architect: unknown  
Frederick White, chemist

Construction pre-permit records. From ratebooks (Shop & Dwelling, Frederick White occupier under Rating Act). Extension at rear 1916 (00053:188:10327), shop front and verandah altered 1937 (B16367).

Frederick White, chemist, 1879-1908 (Deed 62/272 & 184/64). Robert Pearson, company manager, and Norman Perston, accountant, 1908-1916 (Deed 184/64 & 215/484), Thomas Halpin 1916-1925 (Deed 215/484 & 267/513), Woolf Black, draper, and James Gibson, fancy goods dealer, 1925-1937 (Deed 267/513 & CT 340/60), James Gibson 1937-1951 (CT 340/60), Joseph Davis, auctioneer, 1951-1961 (CT 340/60), Bell Radio and Television Corporation, 1961-1973 CT 340/60), Ivan Yee and May Yee, market gardeners, 1973-2000 (CT 340/60), Michael Yee and Susan Yee, 2000-2004 (CT 340/60), Krogh Holdings, 2004-present (CT 340/60).

Frederick White, chemist (*Stones* 1891-2), John Berry, chemist (*Stones* 1895-96), William Coy, chemist (*Stones* 1900), Henry Hope, draper (*Stones* 1905, 1910-11), Thomas Halpin, draper (*Stones* 1915-16, 1920), Tea Rooms (*Stones* 1925, 1930, 1935, 1940, 1945, *Wises* 1950-51, 1955), Amalgamated Tele-Hire (*Wises* 1967-68, 1971-72, ), Bell Radio & Television Corp Ltd (*Wises* 1967-68, 1971-72), Golding's Handcrafts (*Wises* 1975, 1980, 1985). Not listed 1990.