

## **L.T. Watkins Building**

176-182 Cuba Street



*Image: Charles Collins, 2014*

### **Summary of heritage significance**

- The L.T. Watkins Building is a fine example of a large Edwardian warehouse/commercial building. The two street-facing facades are symmetrical, well-proportioned, and feature a restrained palette of Classical ornamentation. The eclectic shop-front at 'Midnight Espresso' is also notable for its contribution to the lively Cuba Street streetscape.
- The building has historic value for its connection to several successful Wellington businessmen and businesses, first Veitch and Allan for whom the building was constructed, and then L.T. Watkins, with whom it is primarily associated now.
- This building is the largest Edwardian commercial building on upper Cuba Street and is located on a prominent corner site. It adds visual interest to the streetscape and defines the end of the block between Ghuznee and Vivian Streets.

District Plan:	Map 16, reference 85/2
Legal Description:	Lot 1 DP 7769
Heritage Area:	Cuba Street Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	Category 2, reference 5366
Archaeological Site:	NZAA Central City R27/270
Other Names:	
Key physical dates:	Built: 1904
Architect / Builder:	Architect: R.R. MacGregor
Former uses:	Commercial – retail
Current uses:	Commercial – retail and restaurants
Earthquake Prone Status:	Not Earthquake Prone – SR 187259

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



## 1.0 Outline History

### 1.1 History

This four-storey Edwardian commercial building was designed and built for Messrs Veitch and Allan in 1904. It was designed by architect R.R. MacGregor and constructed by Thomas Carmichael, with the permit being issued in November of 1904. The building was designed as Veitch and Allan's department store, with open plan floors on each level. Veitch and Allan were prosperous drapers at the time and the original drawings show three main floors, with an attic storey above, which may have been the manager's flat.<sup>1</sup>

The construction is load bearing brick masonry on concrete foundations and piles. Cast iron columns support iron joists carrying timber floor members. The façade is a utilitarian version of the prevalent Edwardian Classical style. The comparatively large area of windows to wall surface suggests that functional requirements such as good lighting of the interior took some precedence over stylistic considerations.

By 1928 Veitch and Allan had sold the building to L.T. Watkins. Lemuel Thomas Watkins (1874-1951) was born in Christchurch and apprenticed as a compositor and printer at Smith, Anthony, Sellars Ltd. He worked on both sides of the Tasman at the turn of the century, including stints in Wellington with Robert Coupland Harding, Messrs McKee & Co., and C.M. Banks, and with H.J. Weeks in Christchurch. Watkins applied to be Government Printer of Western Australia, but later withdrew his application when appointed works manager at the New Zealand Times in Wellington where, amongst many jobs, he was solely responsible for producing the highly successful full-colour Christmas edition of *The Mail*. After raising £5000 capital through a private joint stock company float, he brought the Progressive Printing Company and entered into a short-lived partnership with his former Times co-workers Tyler and Tolan. In 1911, he brought out their shares and became the sole proprietor of L.T. Watkins Ltd., which became a respected printing, stationary, and bookbinding firm which provided a solid foundation for the busy and profitable Wellington book trade. L.T. Watkins died in 1951 and the company was continued by his son Lemuel Eber Watkins until 1990.<sup>2</sup>

Since this time the building has had a number of owners and occupants, and has been converted to house commercial retail and restaurants at ground floor level with residential apartments above. This is the largest Edwardian commercial building in upper Cuba Street. It is located on a busy intersection and is a prominent feature in the local townscape.

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<sup>1</sup> Wellington City Council, "176-186 Cuba Street," *Wellington Built Heritage Inventory: Non Residential Precincts 2001*, (Wellington City Council, 2001) CUBA26.

<sup>2</sup> Laura Haughan, "Capital letters: revealing Wellington's urban history through typographic remnants", Unpublished Master's Thesis, 2012, 35, accessed 24 July 2013, [http://mro.massey.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10179/3246/02\\_whole.pdf?sequence=2](http://mro.massey.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10179/3246/02_whole.pdf?sequence=2)

## 1.2 Timeline of modifications

1904	Original building construction
1922	176-186 Cuba Street, shop front alterations (00055:8:A779)
1928	176-186 Cuba Street, building alterations (00056:57:B5519)
1929	176-186 Cuba Street, alter building (00056:84:B7924)
1943	176-186 Cuba Street, reinstate building (00056:282:B22635)
1957	176-186 Cuba Street, lift well (00058:30:C1541)
1958	176-186 Cuba Street, shop alterations (00058:58:C2877)
1959	176-186 Cuba Street, building alterations (00058:111:C5404)
1964	176-186 Cuba Street, building alterations (00058:354:C15228)
1965	176-186 Cuba Street, building alterations - shop (00058:409:C17495)
1966	176-186 Cuba Street, Verandah (00058:444:C19009)
2001	Converted to apartments and retail space on ground floor

## 1.3 Occupation history<sup>3</sup>

Veitch and Allan, drapers (Stones1905,1910-11,1915- 16,1920,1925).

Listed as Watkin's Building Stones1930.

L.T. Watkins Ltd, printers, publishers & publicity specialists (Stones1930, 1935,1940,1945, Wises 1950-51,1955,1961-62, 1967-68,1971-72,1975, 1980,1985,1990).

Long-term tenants include:

Direct Mail Advertising Service (Stones1930, 1935, 1940,1945, Wises 1950-51, 1955,1961-62,1967-68, 1971-72,1975), Quality Furnishing Co (Stones 1935,1940, Wises1950-51, 1955,1961-62), Kinder Gowns Ltd (Stones 1945,Wises 1950-51,1955.), Peerless Tie Factory, Peerless handkerchief Company (Wises 1955, 1961- 62, 1967- 68,1971-72, 1975,1980,1985), The Hobb Coffee Bar (Wises1961-62, 1967-68,1971-72, 1975, 1980,1985), Newbold & Co, refrigeration & electrical engineers, shop (Wises1967-68,1971-72, 1975), Abel Traders, 2nd hand goods (Wises1980, 1985, 1990)

2000- Building unit titled

## 1.4 Architect

### R.R. Macgregor

Robert Roy Macgregor established an architectural practice at the National Mutual Buildings on Customhouse Quay in 1893.<sup>4</sup> He won a competition for the design of the Ballance Memorial in parliament grounds in 1894, but the members of parliament rejected the design and called instead for the installation of a statue which was eventually designed by W.J. Helyer, on a base designed by Macgregor.<sup>5</sup>

Macgregor designed the Pahiatua Courthouse and Post Office in 1894<sup>6</sup> along with a multitude of houses in Wellington and the Hutt Valley. <sup>7</sup> He entered into partnership

<sup>3</sup> Wellington City Council, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Spreadsheet (Blocks 1-3)*, (Wellington City Council: Unpublished Report prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> Cyclopedia

<sup>5</sup> THE BALLANCE MEMORIAL UNVEILING OF THE STATUE IN PARLIAMENTARY GROUNDS. Evening Post, 7 April 1897, Page 5; THE BALLANCE MEMORIAL. Press, 10 March 1894, Page 7

<sup>6</sup> Page 4 Advertisements Column 5 Evening Post, 23 May 1894, Page 4

with James Hector McKay in February 1898<sup>8</sup> and practised as “McKay and Macgregor” until December 1900 when the partnership was dissolved “by mutual consent”.<sup>9</sup> The best known building designed during this period was the fine St James’ Presbyterian Church (1900) on Adelaide Road in Newtown, and McKay went on to found Crichton and McKay, a prominent and long established Wellington architectural practice.

Macgregor is known to have remained in business in Wellington until at least 1904 when he designed the L.T Watkins Building on the corner of Cuba and Vivian Streets. He is also known as the architect for a row of four near-identical Tinakori Road houses that were designed for T.G. Macarthy in 1903.

## **2.0 Physical description**

### **2.1 Architecture<sup>10</sup>**

The L.T. Watkins building is a tall four-storey utilitarian version of the prevalent Edwardian Classical style. The comparatively large area of windows to wall surface suggests that functional requirements such as good lighting of the interior took precedence over stylish considerations. The principal detail is concentrated, unusually, at the top floor with strong moulded architraves and keystones to the windows (set in alternating groups) above a dentilled cornice, all capped with a plain parapet.

The Classicism of the building is stripped and muted; there is an allusion to a giant order in the corner pilasters but there has been no attempt at capitals or other decorative or harmonising devices. The corner windows of the top storey have been recessed into segmental arches; all other windows are square headed, with metal glazing bars. This is the largest Edwardian commercial buildings in upper Cuba Street. It is located on a busy intersection and is a prominent feature in the local landscape and completes the block to Vivian Street.<sup>11</sup>

The ground floor features an interesting mix of shop-fronts, the most notable is the eclectic design for ‘Midnight Espresso’ at 178 Cuba.

### **2.2 Materials**

- Load bearing Brick Masonry
- Concrete foundations and piles
- Cast Iron columns
- Iron Joists
- Timber floors
- Metal glazing bars

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<sup>7</sup> For example- Page 1 Advertisements Column 4 Evening Post, 13 August 1896, Page 1; Page 8 Advertisements Column 7 Evening Post, 7 December 1897, Page 8; Page 8 Advertisements Column 7 Evening Post, 25 January 1897, Page 8

<sup>8</sup> Page 6 Advertisements Column 1 Evening Post, 19 February 1898, Page 6

<sup>9</sup> Page 8 Advertisements Column 1. Evening Post, 31 December 1900, Page 8

<sup>10</sup> Wellington City Council, “176-186 Cuba Street”

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

### **2.3 Setting**

This building is an important feature in the Cuba Street Heritage Area. It is the largest commercial Edwardian building on Cuba Street and located on a busy intersection. This building completes the block between Ghuznee and Vivian Streets, and is adjoined by the three storey McGuire building, a heavy set Victorian Classical masonry construction dating to 1900. Across Vivian Street is the dignified former National Bank building.

### **3.0 Sources**

Haughan, Laura. "Capital letters: revealing Wellington's urban history through typographic remnants." Unpublished Master's Thesis, 2012. Accessed 24 July 2013, [http://mro.massey.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10179/3246/02\\_whole.pdf?sequence=2](http://mro.massey.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10179/3246/02_whole.pdf?sequence=2)

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

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

Wellington City Council. *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. Wellington City Council, 2001.

#### **Papers Past**

Page 8 Advertisements Column 1. Evening Post, 31 December 1900, Page 8

THE BALLANCE MEMORIAL UNVEILING OF THE STATUE IN PARLIAMENTARY GROUNDS. Evening Post, 7 April 1897, Page 5; THE BALLANCE MEMORIAL. Press, 10 March 1894, Page 7

Page 4 Advertisements Column 5 Evening Post, 23 May 1894, Page 4

Page 1 Advertisements Column 4 Evening Post, 13 August 1896, Page 1

Page 8 Advertisements Column 7 Evening Post, 7 December 1897, Page 8

Page 8 Advertisements Column 7 Evening Post, 25 January 1897, Page 8

Page 6 Advertisements Column 1 Evening Post, 19 February 1898, Page 6

#### **Wellington City Archive**

00055:8:A779  
00056:57:B5519  
00056:84:B7924  
00056:282:B22635  
00058:30:C1541  
00058:58:C2877  
00058:111:C5404  
00058:354:C15228  
00058:409:C17495  
00058:444:C19009



## 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 LT Watkin's Building is a fine example of a large Edwardian warehouse/commercial building. The two street-facing facades are symmetrical, well-proportioned, and feature a restrained palette of Classical ornamentation. The eclectic shop-front at 'Midnight Espresso' is also notable for its contribution to the lively Cuba Street streetscape.

**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?*

This building is the largest Edwardian commercial building on upper Cuba Street and is located on a prominent corner site. It adds visual interest to the streetscape and defines the end of the block between Ghuznee and Vivian Streets.

**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?*

This building is sited in the Cuba Street Heritage Area and makes a positive contribution to the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

#### **Historic Value:**

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

The building has historic value for its connection to several successful Wellington businessmen and businesses, first Veitch and Allan for whom the building was constructed, and then L.T. Watkins, with whom it is primarily now associated.

**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 (including the LT Watkin's Building).

#### **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 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 building is representative of the architecture and history found on Cuba Street.

**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 and the conversion to apartments.

**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 and its connections to two prominent Wellington Businesses.

## 4.0 Appendix

### Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory		
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory		
WCC Records – building file		
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		
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)		

### Background research

*Insert any relevant background information into this section. This may include:*

- *Additional plans, such as those for alterations*
- *Chunks of text from other sources such as Cyclopedia of NZ, Papers Past*
- *Additional images*