

National Bank Te Aro Building (Former)

192-194 Cuba Street



Photo: *Charles Collins, 2014*

Summary of heritage significance

- The former National Bank at 192-194 Cuba Street is the purest example of Classical design on Cuba Street. The facade is balanced and harmonious, and incorporates a skilled and restrained use of important motifs to achieve this effect. The interior is notable for its surviving banking chamber and dome.
- This building was designed in 1917 for the National Bank by Canadian architect Claude Plimmer Jones. It remained a bank for almost 80 years.
- It makes a significant contribution to the Cuba Street townscape.

District Plan:	Map 16, reference 88 (<i>Cuba Street and Vivian Street facades, the entrance foyer and the ground floor Banking Chamber - including the ceiling, pillars and dome</i>)
Legal Description:	Lot 1 DP 83518
Heritage Area:	Cuba Street Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	Category I, reference 3634
Archaeological Site:	Central City NZAA R27/270
Other Names:	Logan Brown
Key physical dates:	1917
Architect / Builder:	Claude Plimmer Jones / W McLellan
Former uses:	Bank
Current uses:	Restaurant / residential apartment
Earthquake Prone Status:	Not EQP (SR 179929)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2013



1.0 Outline History

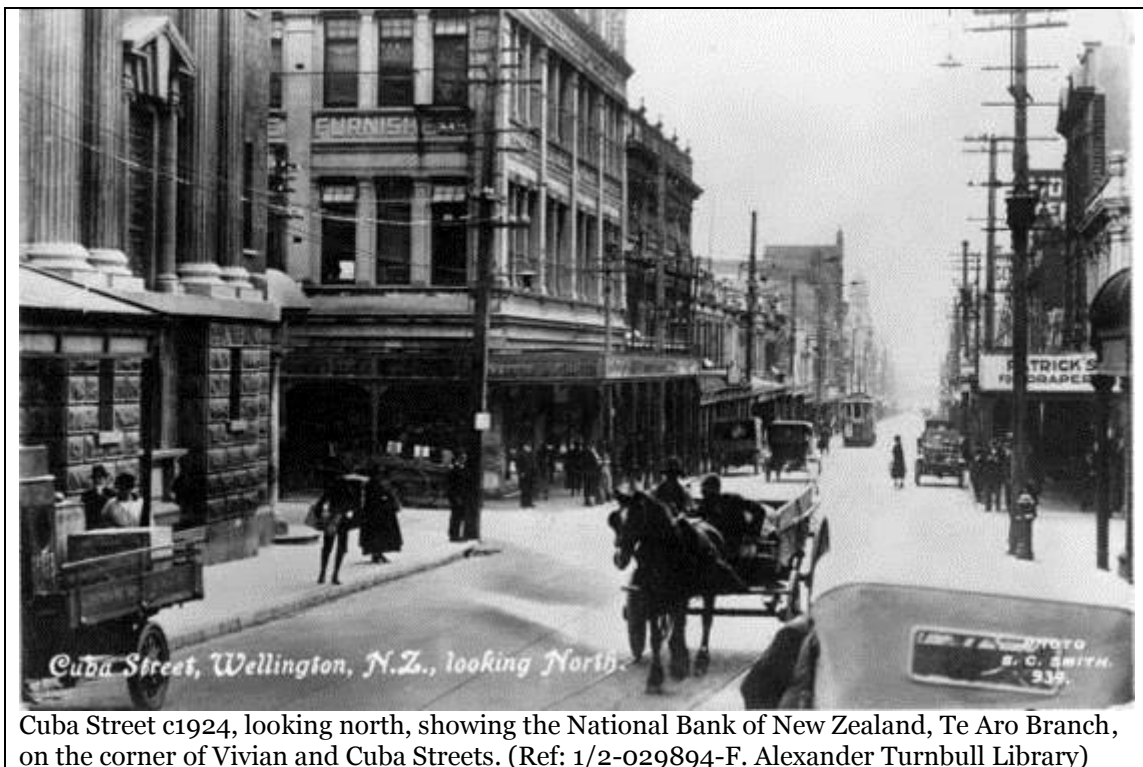
1.1 History

This building was designed by Canadian architect Claude Plimmer Jones in 1917 for the National Bank.¹ The general contractor was W. McLellan of Dunedin.²

The building was specifically designed as banking premises. The main interior feature is an octagonal banking chamber which rises from the ground to the second floor and is covered with an 18 foot glazed dome.

The bank was along the route of Wellington's tram system which linked the city and its residential suburbs to the area from 1878 until 1964.

A branch of the National Bank occupied the building until 1996. At this time it was converted into a restaurant, *Logan Brown*, with an apartment on the second floor.



Cuba Street c1924, looking north, showing the National Bank of New Zealand, Te Aro Branch, on the corner of Vivian and Cuba Streets. (Ref: 1/2-029894-F. Alexander Turnbull Library)

¹ Wellington City Council, "192-194 Cuba Street," *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 28.

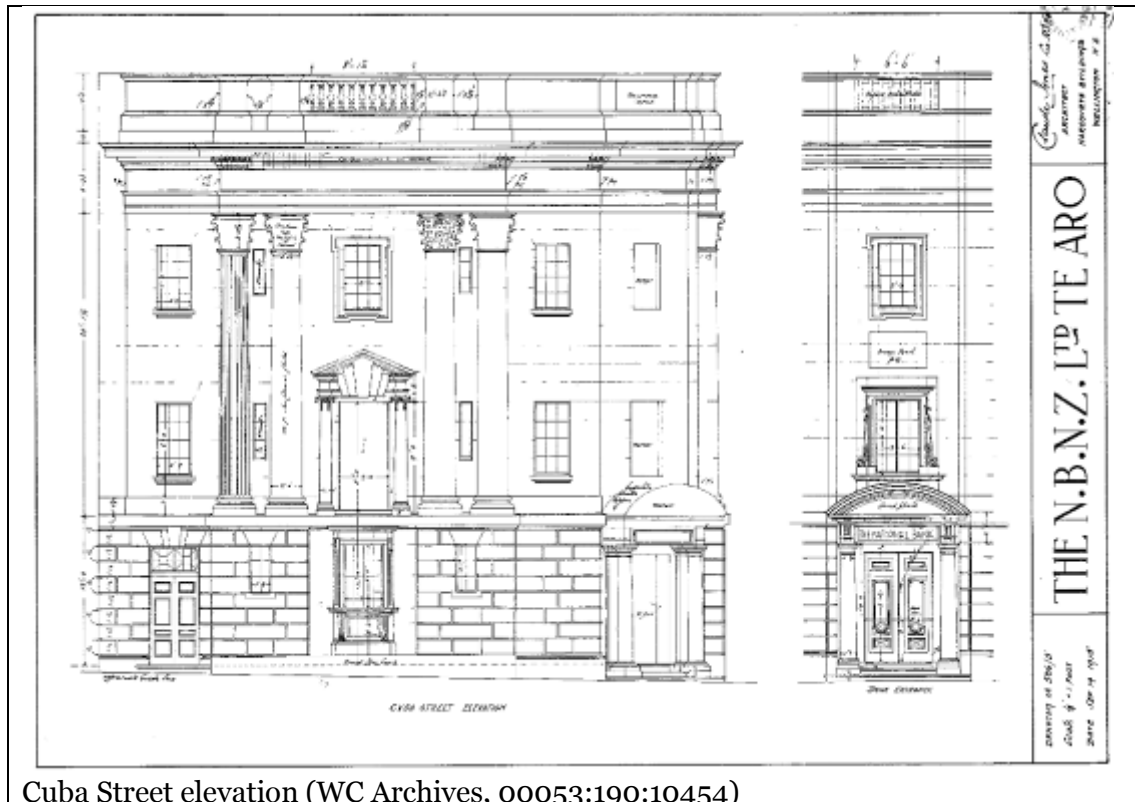
² "New City Bank," *Dominion*, Volume 10, Issue 3006, 17 February 1917, Page 6



Looking north east along Cuba Street c1928. Shows businesses on both sides of the street including the National Bank of New Zealand. (Ref: 1/2-048946-G. Alexander Turnbull Library)

1.2 Timeline of modifications

- 1917 Building constructed (00053:190:10454)
- 1950 Internal alterations – ground floor fit out (00056:384:B29616)
- 1975 Internal alterations (00058:1003:C43832)
- 1996 Conversion to restaurant (00078:30:24039)
- 2000 New bar area (00078:722:61447)
- 2006 Dwelling additions and alterations (00078:2231:152107)



1.3 Occupation history ³

- 1917-1996 National Bank of New Zealand (Stones 1920, 1925, 1930, 1935, 1940, 1945, Wises 1950-51, 1955, 1961-62, 1967-68, 1971-72, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990)
- c1945-1955 John Blyth tailor (Stones 1945, Wises 1950-51, 1955)
- 1996-2013 Logan Brown

³ Ibid.

1.4 Architect

Claude Plimmer Jones

Plimmer-Jones practised in Wellington from about 1914 to around 1927. He was a Canadian by birth and a slightly eccentric character. He had a reputation for being a fanatical follower of the Classical styles of architecture. All his work was meticulously correct in detail in accordance with the laws of Vitruvius and other classical masters. He was no modernist, and to him, anything departing from Classical models was not really architecture.

He was also a student of astrology and in many of his buildings he incorporated the signs of the zodiac, so earnest was he that on occasions he arranged that the opening dates of his buildings coincided with a favourable position of the stars. This frequently annoyed his hard-headed and less imaginative clients. But he was firm and stood his ground; in most cases he won. He left New Zealand in the late 1920s.⁴

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

The former National Bank is the purest example of Classical design on Cuba Street. The facade is balanced and harmonious, and incorporates a skilled and restrained use of important motifs to achieve this effect. The rusticated base, is one element, the giant order of attached Corinthian columns is another. The columns support a simple entablature, with “The National Bank of New Zealand” moulded onto it. The nine-light window that sits between the columns on the first floor has been designed as an aedicule, with its own system of attached columns and pediment. The other windows on the facade are simple rectangles of the same size with some variation in the treatment of architraves and hoods. A clean, well conceived cornice and balustraded parapet cap the building.⁵

2.2 Materials

The construction is reinforced concrete on concrete foundations and piles. The base is faced with rusticated Malmesbury stone, and the main entrance is faced with Sandy Bay marble.⁶

2.3 Setting

Sited on a prominent corner, the former National Bank building is an important element in the middle Cuba Street townscape.⁷

⁴ Wellington City Council, APPENDIX III, *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001).

⁵ Wellington City Council, “192-194 Cuba Street,” *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 28.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

3.0 Sources

Kelly, Michael, and Russell Murray, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Report* (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006), 34.

Wellington City Council, “192-194 Cuba Street,” *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 28.

Wellington City Council, APPENDIX III, *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001).

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

Newspapers

“New City Bank,” *Dominion*, Volume 10, Issue 3006, 17 February 1917, Page 6

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?*

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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 design is a skilled Classical composition, which takes full advantage of both street frontages on this prominent corner site. The building has never had a verandah, giving it greater prominence in the streetscape. The building makes a significant contribution to the Cuba Street townscape.

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 historical value of the building derives from the fact that it was specifically designed as banking premises, and remained as such for almost 80 years.

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?*

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 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 the finest example of a Classical building 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?*

Despite some modern modifications, the façade and interior of the building retains a high level of authenticity of design and fabric.

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	Contains copies of: - <i>Victoria University School of Architecture report by Scott Willis (2000)</i> - <i>NZ Building Progress July 1917</i> - <i>NZ Building Progress September 1923</i>
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)	Y	
HPT website	Y	
HPT files		
Conservation Plan		
Searched Heritage Library (CAB 2)	Y	Nothing found

Background research

“New City Bank,” *Dominion*, Volume 10, Issue 3006, 17 February 1917, Page 6

<http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&cl=search&d=DOM19170217.2.22&srpos=1&e=-1917---1917--10--1----onational+bank+cuba-->