

Commercial Building

241-243 Cuba Street



241 Cuba Street (Photo: *Charles Collins, 2015*)

Summary of heritage significance

- Designed by William Chatfield in 1908, this two-storey masonry building has architectural value for its carefully composed Edwardian Classical façade which features an elaborately ornamented parapet.
- The facade is in reasonably authentic condition with a high level of original detailing.
- This building is part of a group of Edwardian commercial buildings on Cuba Street which contributes positively to the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

District Plan:	Map 16, reference 91/1 (<i>front facade from ground floor up</i>)
Legal Description:	Lot 4 DP 19320
Heritage Area:	Cuba Street Heritage Area
HPT Listed:	Category 2, reference 3625
Archaeological Site:	
Other Names:	GHB Wilkinson Building
Key physical dates:	1908
Architect / Builder:	Architect: William Chatfield / Builder: Murdoch and Wallis
Former uses:	Shop and dwelling
Current uses:	Retail and offices
Earthquake Prone Status:	Posted (SR 181459)

Extent: Cityview GIS 2012



1.0 Outline History

1.1 History

This building was designed as a shop and dwelling in 1908 by architect William Chatfield for Mrs Ada Downes.

At the time of construction the land was owned by Francis Sidey, a well known resident of Wellington who ran an auction house.¹ The Downes family may have leased the land from Sidey and constructed the building, as Ada Downes is listed as the owner on the building permit. However no lease is recorded.² The Downes family purchased the property in 1922 and it stayed in the family until 1959.

The original use was as a single shop on the ground floor and residential accommodation above. At one point the ground floor retail space was divided into two shops and the top floor was converted to office space.³ Presently the top floor remains office space, however the ground floor has been returned to just one shop.

For many years the ground floor shop was occupied by drapers. From the 1930s to the 1970s it was a grocery store. In the mid 1970s 'GHB Wilkinson Ltd' is listed as the occupant, hence the name of the building in the District Plan listing. In the mid 1980s the building was bought by the Wellington Presbyterian Social Service Association and operated as a Presbyterian Op-shop. In 1997-8 the building was seismically strengthened. Steel frames were added to the front and rear of the building.⁴ Currently (2012) the women's clothing boutique "Swonderful" occupies the ground floor shop, and the first floor is used as offices by Havana.



Detail from the original plans showing the Cuba Street elevation (WC Archives 00053:148:8200)

Comment [MK1]: No sign of the parapet in this drawing. Was it added later?

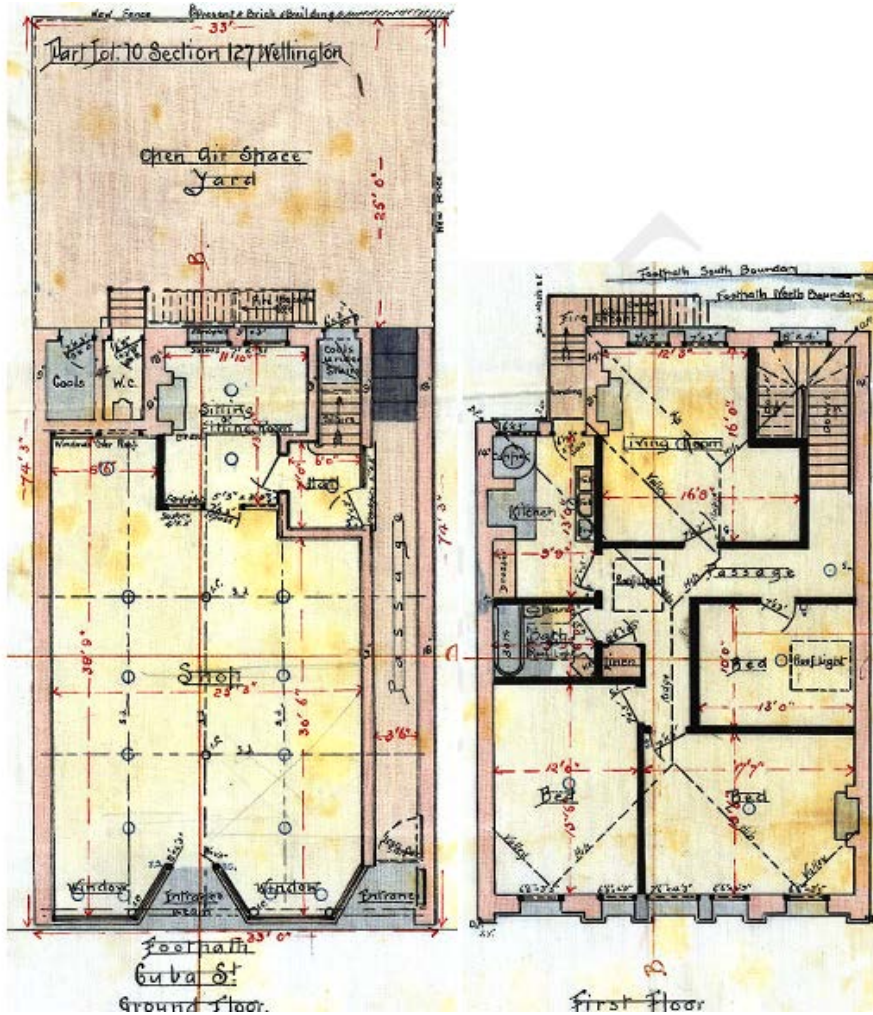
¹ *Evening Post*, Volume CXII, Issue 60, 8 September 1926, Page 10. See also: Cyclopeda Co. Ltd, "Sidey, Francis and Co.", *The Cyclopeda of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District* (Wellington: The Cyclopeda Company Limited, 1897), accessed 17 September 2012, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d32-d53.html>

² Land Title Service, CT190/4

³ Wellington City Council, "241-243 Cuba Street", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 34.

⁴ "Heritage building - 241-243 Cuba Street - GHB Wilkinson Building", 1041-06-CUB241 vol.1, Wellington City Council Records.

1.2 Timeline of modifications



Detail from the original plans showing the ground and first floors (WC Archives 00053:148:8200)

- 1908-9 Building constructed (00053:148:8200)
- 1997 Seismic strengthening 1997 (SR34897)

1.3 Occupation history

Archer's Drapery Store (Stones 1910-11, 1915-16, 1920, 1925)
Perry's Drapers (Stones 1930)
Russell & Co, grocers (Stones 1935, 1940, 1945, Wises 1955)
Lewis' Stores, grocers (Wises 1961-62, 1967-68, 1971-72)
GHB Wilkinson Ltd (Wises 1975, 1980)
Presbyterian Op-shop (Wises 1985)
Ceramixx (Wises 1990)⁵

1996 – First floor offices used by Presbyterian Support Services Youth Social workers, a charitable organisation temporarily occupying the ground floor until the building is strengthened.⁶

Workshop picture framers (? – 2011)
Swonderful – retail space (2012)
Havana – first floor office (2011 (?)) - present)

1.4 Architect

Chatfield, William Charles

Chatfield (c1851-1930) was born in Sussex and educated in Brixton, Surrey. He came to New Zealand in 1867 at the age of sixteen and was immediately engaged in architectural work. He joined the Public Service in 1872 as Chief Draughtsman and Assistant Paymaster and Engineer in the Engineer's Department of the Wellington Province. He held these positions until 1876 when provincial government was abolished. During this time he worked on the Thorndon reclamation and designed many bridges. He went into private practice in 1876 and designed several large office and warehouse buildings.

Chatfield's buildings were characterised by their enormous strength resulting from the use of heavy masonry reinforced with railway irons for foundations, cornices and columns. Chatfield contributed to the foundation and development of the New Zealand Institute of Architects and was elected first president for the 1905-06 term. He was re-elected for the following term, 1906-07, and again in 1914-15.⁷

Among his buildings are:

- The Boatshed / Star Boating Club (1885)
- Wellington Opera House (1886) (demolished)
- Colonial Mutual Insurance Building, corner Customhouse Quay and Willeston Street (1897)
- Stewart Dawson's Building (1900)
- Kings Chambers, corner Willis and Willeston Streets (1902)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "Heritage building - 241-243 Cuba Street - GHB Wilkinson Building", 1041-06-CUB241 vol.1, Wellington City Council Records.

⁷ Historic Places Trust, "Chatfield, William Charles - Architect", *Professional Biographies*. Accessed 17 September 2012.

<http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Chatfield,+William+Charles>; and Cyclopedia Co. Ltd, "Chatfield, Willam Charles", in *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District* (Wellington: The Cyclopedia Company Limited, 1897), accessed 17 September 2012, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d33.html>

2.0 Physical description

2.1 Architecture

This fine Edwardian Classical masonry building of two tall storeys features an elaborately ornamented parapet, complete with balustrading, a central semi-circular pediment, acroterion and flagpole. The pediment is supported on large consoles which project from the plain entablature.

Acanthus-capped pilasters at either end of the carefully composed facade have stylised Corinthian capitals. The five square-headed windows are deeply recessed and have bracketed hoods over them. The bull-nosed verandah over the footpath is an authentic refurbished Edwardian element, and two of the cast iron posts are original. Despite modifications to the shop fronts, the facade of the building is in reasonably authentic condition and contributes to the streetscape.⁸

2.2 Materials

The construction features a reinforced concrete frame with unreinforced brick infill on concrete foundations. The ground and first floors are reinforced concrete overlaid with totara joists and kauri tongue-and-groove flooring.⁹

2.3 Setting

The building sits among a row of old and modern buildings of varying scales and architecture on Cuba Street between Vivian Street and Abel Smith Street.

The building is adjoined on either side by two temporary-looking modern single storey buildings.

On the other side of the road is the Wellington Trawlers complex, including a small modern single-storey street-front shop and a parking area and several other unremarkable modern commercial buildings set back from the street front. On the south side of the gap is a group of small Victorian timber buildings. This combination of smaller buildings and open space helps give this part of Cuba Street a more open aspect than the blocks to the north.

⁸ Michael Kelly and Russell Murray, *Cuba Street Heritage Area Report*. (Wellington City Council: Unpublished report, prepared for Plan Change 48, 2006), 44; and Wellington City Council, "241-243 Cuba Street", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 34.

⁹ Wellington City Council, "241-243 Cuba Street".

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 two-storey masonry building has architectural value for its carefully composed Edwardian Classical façade which features the most elaborately ornamented parapet on Cuba Street.

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, with its ornate facade, makes a distinct contribution to the Cuba Street 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?*

This building is part of a group of Edwardian commercial buildings on Cuba Street which contributes positively to the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

Historic Value:

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

This building has historic value for its association with the designer, notable Wellington architect William Chatfield.

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.

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 in 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 facade of the building is in reasonably authentic condition with a high level of original detailing, despite modifications to the ground floor shop front.

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, as it contributes to the Cuba Street Heritage Area.

3.0 Sources

Cyclopedia Co. Ltd, "Chatfield, Willam Charles", in *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District* (Wellington: The Cyclopedia Company Limited, 1897), accessed 17 September 2012, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d33.html>

Cyclopedia Co. Ltd, "Sidey, Francis and Co.", *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand: Wellington Provincial District* (Wellington: The Cyclopedia Company Limited, 1897), accessed 17 September 2012, <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-Cyc01Cycl-t1-body-d4-d32-d53.html>

Historic Places Trust, "Chatfield, William Charles - Architect", *Professional Biographies*. Accessed 17 September 2012. <http://www.historic.org.nz/corporate/registersearch/ProfessionalBio/Professional.aspx?CPName=Chatfield,+William+Charles;>

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

Wellington City Council, "241-243 Cuba Street", *Wellington Heritage Building Inventory 2001: Non-Residential Buildings*. (Wellington City Council, 2001), CUBA 34.

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

Newspapers

Evening Post, Volume CXII, Issue 60, 8 September 1926, Page 10.

Wellington City Council Records

"Heritage building - 241-243 Cuba Street - GHB Wilkinson Building", 1041-06-CUB241 vol.1, Wellington City Council Records.

Land Information New Zealand, CT190/4

4.0 Appendix

Research checklist (desktop)

Source	Y/N	Comments
1995 Heritage Inventory	Y	
2001 Non-Residential heritage Inventory	Y	
WCC Records – building file	Y	1041-06-CUB241
WCC Records – grant files (earthquake strengthening, enhancement of heritage values)		
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)		

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*